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BANDWAGON

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Fred D. Pfening III ————— Editor and Publisher

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Thanks

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The Covers

The Gentry Bros. Dog and Pony Show thrived by embracing the novel policy that customer satisfaction was everything. An 1899 Fort Wayne newspaper summed it up: "All the way through, the performance was clean cut, refined and moral, just such a one as to leave a good and lasting impression such as the Gentry show has wherever it has been." The show never tolerated grift; in fact, it didn't have a side show until 1910.

Photos of Gentry on the lot paint an idyllic landscape. Its wagons always looked great, in part because of the company's practice, unheard of elsewhere in the industry, of repairing and repainting them during long stands during the tour. Its superior management was recognized throughout the business. When the Ringling brothers needed bosses for their newly acquired Forepaugh-Sells Circus in 1905, they raided the Gentry organization.

While the Gentry show's reputation is well known, its early history is muddy, tangled and thorny. Lack of space and evidence prohibits its retelling here. Documentation suggests, however, that in 1899, the year the courier on the cover was used, the Gentrys put out four units for the first time, each on four railroad cars.

This promotional piece, reproduced in its entirety and in its original colors on the front and back covers and in the centerfold of the magazine, measures 10¼" x 13". The Erie Lithograph Company, the poor showman's Strobridge, produced the flyer. It was distributed in Kokomo, Indiana a week or two prior to the circus's June 7, 1899 visit.

The courier's back page has a wonderful graphic of the performance's highlight: a number called, "The Night Alarm," in which monkeys, dogs and ponies put out a fire. An Omaha daily captured the mayhem: "At the rear of the tent is a little house, which suddenly bursts into flames—all is excitement for a moment, the bells rings loudly and . . . a half dozen dogs and a monkey or so go into the burning

building and endeavor to save all possible. Then comes the miniature fire department, consisting of a hook and ladder wagon, hose reel and an old-fashioned hand pump engine. The entire outfit is manned by monkeys. One grabs a ladder and places it at the window, rushes back and takes the hose into the house from which the flames by this time are pouring. The hose is quickly attached to the pump wagon, the monkeys jerk the handle bars like mad and the fire is extinguished." A Logansport, Indiana paper raved about the display: "This act is really wonderful and one can hardly realize that the little animals are capable of doing such feats." It had to have been glorious.

The inside two pages illustrate the show's parade. In the spring of 1898 the Walborn and Riker Company of St. Paris, Ohio built identical sets of five parade wagons for both Gentry units. Among the vehicles were a shoe float, a hook and ladder wagon, and a hose wagon, all three of which are fairly accurately depicted in the drawing.

While the Gentry family sold out after the 1916 season, their Dog and Pony Show's good name and great reputation remains. Original in Pfening Archives. Fred D. Pfening III

UniverSoul Circus Added to Convention

A visit to the UniverSoul Circus will kick off the annual Circus Historical Society convention on Wednesday July 17. At 3:00 p.m. a bus will leave from the Best Western Circus City Inn for the trip to Indianapolis where members will have dinner before going to the 7:30 p.m.

performance. UniverSoul is one of the best circuses in the country and is not to be missed. The cost of bus travel and the show is \$60.00.

The annual convention will be held in Peru, Indiana from July 17 to 20. The conference begins with registration on Wednesday July 17 from 10:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. at the Best Western Circus City Inn in Peru. The Board of Trustees will meet at 10:00 a.m.

The following day is devoted to historical presentations beginning at 9:00 a.m. Dick Moore begins the session with a report on circus lantern slides. Lane Talburt follows with a video about African-Americans on circuses. Charles Conrad then makes a presentation on circus music.

The matinee performance includes Sarah Chapman discussing her life in the circus, Steve Gossard sharing his expertise on flying acts, and Dick and Terry Abbott analyzing Ringling-Barnum wardrobe.

After dinner at a Chinese buffet, the always-popular CHS auction will be the evening's highlight. In past years, many rare pieces of circus ephemera have gone on the block including animal booklets, couriers, programs, lithographs and letterheads.

On Friday July 19 members visit the International Circus Hall of Fame, located on the sacred ground that was once the winter quarters of the American Circus Corporation. A tour of the site, a concert by a 60-piece circus band led by Charles Conrad, and a Terrell Jacobs impersonator fill the morning. Tables will be available for those wishing to sell or trade circus collectibles at \$20.00 for registered members and \$35.00 for others. Those interested in a table should contact Bob

Cline.

A catered lunch will be followed by a performance of the Hall of Fame Circus under the big top. That night conventioners enjoy a performance of the Peru Amateur Circus, which is remarkably professional.

Saturday, the meeting's last day, is in downtown Peru. It begins with the Circus City Festival Parade. Bleacher seats have been procured to assure a comfortable, convivial experience. That afternoon attendees assemble at the Miami County Museum to tour its new circus exhibit. Artifacts and memorabilia long in storage will be displayed. The convention concludes that evening with the Circus Hall of Fame annual induction ceremony of this year's recipient Jacqueline Zerbini, the presentation of the Stuart Thayer Award, and the banquet.

The Best Western Circus City Inn is convention headquarters. The CHS's block of rooms is virtually sold out, but on the chance of a cancellation, members can try to make reservations by calling 765-473-8800. Across the street is a no-frills Knights Inn, which has a rate of \$49.00 per night. The Knights Inn is almost sold out but reservations can be made by calling 800-843-5644. Alternative accommodations are available in Wabash, Indiana, fifteen minutes from Peru.

The cost of the convention is \$155.00 per person, plus another \$60.00 for those wishing to attend the UniverSoul Circus. The CHS website <www.circushistory.org> contains a registration form. Members may also register by writing Secretary-Treasurer Bob Cline at 2707 Zoar Road, Cheraw, South Carolina 29520.

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On Ringling-Barnum in 1955

Part I

by William C. Taggart



Winter 1954-1955 in Sarasota

The 1954 season of the Greatest Show on Earth ended on Sunday evening, November 28 in Miami. Performers and workingmen were worn out, ready to pack up, board the train and head to Sarasota for a well-earned rest. The final jump was 293 miles and after a few drinks with my friends in the usher's car and a great big hamburger prepared by porter John Martinez I packed up my clothes and took a taxi to a hotel on Biscayne Boulevard for the night. I was ready to stretch out and enjoy a good sleep. I was a bit sad to see the season end.

The 1954 route book sold for \$1.50, and if you can find one today it will sell for about \$20.00. John and Henry North wrote the following dedication in the 1954 edition "To Willie Carr who trouped with all our uncles and remains today one of our most valued friends and employees, this little book is affectionately dedicated." Willie Carr was out trouping again during the 1955 season.

After two days of enjoying the sights of Miami, I was at the airport early one morning for a National Airlines flight to Syracuse, New York. I took movies of the plane before we boarded and movies of us flying over the suburbs of Miami and north along the Florida coastline to Cape Hatteras where it became very turbulent. We landed once in Scranton, Pennsylvania during a snow storm and then on to Syracuse, where my mother met me.

Once I was home, I heard from Doc Higgins that there was almost as much excitement on the return as there was in March when the trains headed north for Madison Square Garden. Not only were there happy performers and working men but the ring stock horses, elephants and performing animals and menagerie animals knew they were home. Old Harold, the elephant department horse, was especially jumpy and excited to be home, where he could finally be turned out to rest in the Florida sunshine.

My aunt and uncle were waiting with my mom when the plane arrived in Syracuse and soon we were driving forty miles to Clyde. Our dog Pal, an English bullterrier, was delighted to see me. After my summer and fall season on the circus it seemed so quiet at home, but I enjoyed myself. I had long visits with my neighbors, Eleanor and Stanley Johnson. It was Eleanor Johnson to whom I always confided during my teen years.

Once I was in Clyde, I called Willis Lawson and told him that I

was to be drafted. He assured me that a job would be waiting for me upon my return to the circus.

After a few days home and an old fashioned upstate New York Christmas, I was to report to the Lyons Draft Board and then on to the Syracuse induction center. I knew that I would be heading to Fort Dix for training. Soon I was on a bus with thirty other inductees headed to Syracuse for my physical. I went through the early part of the physical and then suddenly a sergeant came into the room and a doctor informed him that he had lost two of the men. The doc turned to me and said, "Yes, you failed the eye exam." He then sent me into a room to sign a form and release me from the draft. I felt bad but also realized that I could call Lawson

and soon be on my way back to Sarasota. I then remembered a stanza from *Bye, Bye Blackbird*, one of my favorite songs. "Pack my bag, light the light, I'll be home late tonight . . . bye, bye, blackbird."

In early January I called Lawson with the news that I was on my way back and he told me that I could go to work for him and his wife Marjorie as soon as I was back in Sarasota. I was able to book a room that I shared with an usher pal at the Lynn Hotel in downtown Sarasota. Alfred Burton and his dad met me at the station and I was so happy to see them. The next morning I was at Lawson's house and drove Marjorie and Fanny McClosky shopping and then went over to the home of Nina Niatto for an afternoon visit. Marjorie Lawson had been a proud member of the Niatto act in the forties. The Niatto troupe, featuring Nio and sister Ala Naitto, were center ring stars noted for a two high head carriage and somersaulting on a slender steel wire.

The next day I was up early and started driving Debbie Lawson to her elementary school and when I returned would do odd chores for Marjorie around the house. After Lawson came home for lunch he would sometimes take me to winter quarters to do errands for him there. It was then that I got to meet many of the department heads.

One afternoon when I was working for Lawson, my friends Alfred Burton and Deiter Haverman stopped by on their red Cushman motor scooters to see if I wanted to head to the beach with them.

As soon as I finished one job Lawson told me to "Take off with your pals and enjoy all the girls at the beach." The next morning when I arrived for work I noticed a beautiful Cushman scooter



Willis Lawson on the Ringling show at Zanesville, Ohio, July 12, 1954. Taggart assisted Lawson and his family in Sarasota in early 1955. Sverre O. Braathen photo used with permission from Illinois State University's Special Collections, Milner Library.

parked in the garage. As Lawson came out of the house, he asked me if I liked the scooter and then he told me it was mine. I couldn't believe it. He was such a wonderful boss and friend. For the rest of my winter stay I was able to ride around Sarasota on my scooter and go to the beach, winter quarters, the drive in movie, and visit circus friends.

As the winter rolled on winter quarters became really busy with acts rehearsing. Charlie Moroski put the liberty acts through their paces every morning. Evy Karoly worked Charlie, the dressage horse. Trevor Bale kept the lions in fine form and Hugo Schmidt and Smokey Jones worked the elephants. Over in the press car Frank Braden, Eddie Howe, and Ken Mayo were writing press releases and working for the new edition of *Circus Magazine*.

Richard and Edith Barstow arrived in early February to stage and choreograph the new show. A jovial guy, Ralph Allen coordinated all the production details and was always scurrying around for the Barstows. The talented designer Miles White created the extensive and colorful wardrobe as well as the spectacular floats for the *Holidays* spec. Freddy White and a crew of fourteen men and Jean Carson and Ethel Freeman, wife of clown Freddy Freeman, along with five other women, were constantly busy sizing wardrobe for the new season. One of the ladies, Elli Powell, was the wife of famed trapeze artist Albert Powell.

Lyricist Irving Caesar was in town and staying in the Ringling Hotel as he worked with Johnny North on music and lyrics for the new show. On Saturday nights we would go to the Ringling Hotel as they presented circus acts during the evening. One night I was thrilled as Irving Caesar did a complete routine based on the lyrics he had written for songs like *Suwannee*, *Tea for Two*, and *Just a Gigolo* as well as two new songs entitled *Impossible* and *On Honolulu Bay* with music by Johnny North. *On Honolulu Bay* was written for the aerial production featuring the talented Pinito Del Oro. *Impossible* was sung by Harold Ronk while Pinito was doing her high trapeze act. I



Richard Barstow, Cleveland, July 11, 1955. Sverre O. Braathen photo used with permission from Illinois State University's Special Collections, Milner Library.

think *Impossible* was also featured during the Josephine Berosini high wire act. Both women were true center ring performers.

During the show's run at Madison Square Garden, Irving Caesar would stop by the Garden office and I would take him into the seats to watch the show and to enjoy his music. He became a good pal and he enjoyed telling me stories about his career. One I remember to this day. Irving said, "George Gershwin wrote this song for Al Jolson to introduce at the Winter Garden and I wrote the lyrics and suddenly it became a huge hit. With some of the money we made from the song we took a trip south to Florida; saw the Suwannee River and I realized my song was more exciting than the river. If I had seen the river first I would have never written the song."

One Friday evening Lawson told me that he had arranged for me to drive a show station wagon to Tampa early Saturday morning and to drive the mother of *New York Post* writer Leonard Lyons and her grandsons to Sarasota. Lyons was noted for his column "The Lyons Den." I was to spend the day with them touring winter quarters and watching dress rehearsals for the 1955 season. I enjoyed showing the family around quarters and introducing them to Trevor Bale, Doc Henderson, Evy and Ilonka Karoly, and Joe Trocey, the nattily dressed Chameleon salesman. On our return to Tampa we stopped at the Giant's Camp Restaurant in Gibsonton for huge hamburgers. Today one of Lyons's sons is noted TV and movie critic Jeffrey Lyons.

My winter was full of trips to Lido Beach, nights at a huge drive in theater on Route 41, near Bradenton, Saturday evenings at the Ringling Hotel, and sometimes fishing trips out on the Gulf with Lawson, his family and guests. Other times I would visit Ringling band cornet player Frank B. Sering at his Circus City trailer park. We would spend the evening cutting up jack pots and enjoying a few beers.

Once in a while I would stop in a bar and pool hall on Main Street and watch old Frenchy and some of the show ushers



High wire walker Josephine Berosini at the Traux Field lot in Madison, Wisconsin, August 2, 1955. Sverre O. Braathen photo used with permission from Illinois State University's Special Collections, Milner Library.



Wagon carrying 62' long center poles and quarter poles at Canton, Ohio, July 5, 1955. In front of wagon is mud block in which bottom of center pole rests and bale ring. Sverre O. Braathen photo used with permission from Illinois State University's Special Collections, Milner Library.

play pool. Frenchy was a talented man with a pool stick. At that time you could ask Henry North about Frenchy's ability. Mr. North could readily attest to the old man's skill.

I also worked at winter quarters selling programs and souvenirs to the tourists on weekends. While working there I became a good friend of the bug man, Joe Trocey. He had a smile for everyone and always wore a bow tie. He always wanted to chat about the golden old days on shows.

Sometimes at night I can still hear the sound and the clack, clack, of our train, the second section, headed along the route of the home run of the season. Early on the morning of November 29, the big show trains slowly moved into the Sarasota railroad yards and were spotted on the rails in winter quarters.

Good News. I Am Going to the Garden 1955

During the winter of 1954-1955 I knew that the circus would be playing Madison Square Garden in New York City from March 30 to May 8 and although I loved Sarasota, I wanted to be at the historic Garden with my circus pals. I had enjoyed working at winter quarters on weekends, running errands for Marjorie Lawson during the week, and free time spent with Alfred Burton of Burton and Son and Dieter Havemann of the Fredonia Risley act.

One Friday evening, when Lawson returned home from winter quarters, I had a chance to ask him if he had plans for me when the show was on the road. His quick reply was "Sure Bill, I want you to leave on the train as it heads north to the Garden." He told me that I could work as a front door man at the circus office, and also be available to help Nena Evans and Edna Antes. I thanked Lawson.

As soon as I had time, I was out at winter quarters to tell my friend Doc Higgins the news. He then told me that I could share a room with him as Mrs. Higgins would still be in Sarasota until daughter Suzanne finished her school year. I thanked Doc for being a pal and I looked forward to being with him in New York.

Before we left for the road, rumors were flying around winter quarters that Milton Pickman, a movie promoter, had convinced John Ringling North that old time circus advertising was out dated and should be replaced by his movie style promotions. As a result of Pickman's efforts, outdoor advertising was cut back and an advertising railroad car and crew were to be taken off the road. Pickman and his agencies would place all movie-like advertising in local newspapers. All this did not sit well with the old-time Ringling people.

Frederick "Babe" Boudinot, general agent and with the show for over forty years and head of the Chicago office, objected at a meeting in Sarasota as did the great press agent F. Beverly Kelley. Boudinot resigned on February 12, 1955 shortly after the Sarasota meeting. He had joined Ringling in 1915 after a stint on Hagenbeck Wallace. He worked as a billposter, led the opposition brigade, managed the advertising car, and then was trained as traffic manager by Arthur Hopper. His loss did not bode well for the 1955 season and the future of the show.

Rehearsals went on in Sarasota under the direction of Richard and Edith Barstow. Miles White, the Broadway designer, had created colorful wardrobe and designed large holiday-themed floats for all the production numbers. Pat Valdo and his assistant Bob Dover were busy directing the large cast of performing artists and Merle Evans and the circus band were in good form, as always.

Charlotte Bell Kora, Maggie Smith, Brenda Jones, Antoinetta Bisbini, Emma Castro, Catherine Burslem, Marjory "Irish" Hill, and Elli Fullgrapp were just a few of the lovely Ringling starlets working on the 1955 production.

Early in the last week of March, flat cars were spotted by the 35 man train crew. All the work was done under the direction of Train Department Superintendent Phillip A. McGrath. When under canvas from Baltimore on, the show carried 80 double length railroad cars, ten more than 1954. The herd of over



Band leader Merle Evans in costume for Rainbow 'Round the World closing spec at Cleveland, July 12, 1955. Sverre O. Braathen photo used with permission from Illinois State University's Special Collections, Milner Library.

50 elephants required more stock cars.

In the huge sail loft Leif Osmundson was in charge of several men and women cutting and sewing the canvas for the huge Ringling big top and the new menagerie top. The main tent in 1955 was 386 feet long and 206 feet wide. Twenty-four thousand yards of canvas were required. There were four 62 foot center poles of Oregon fir as well. The tent required twenty 47 foot aluminum quarter poles, thirty-four 27 foot aluminum quarter poles, and thirty-four 37 foot quarter poles. There were one hundred and eight side poles, all 17 feet long.

The new menagerie tent was 242 feet long and 91 feet wide with five center poles. Because of the shortage of help and small lots, this tent was not used at every stand. Many days the menagerie was side walled.

At the same time, Edward R. "Whitey" Versteeg and a large crew were overhauling the large show generators and preparing the miles of heavy-duty electrical cable and junction boxes for the season.

Over at the truck department, David W. Blanchfield and assistant David Connelly were busy with a crew changing tires on the trucks and tractors, greasing trucks, tractors, and caterpillar tractors. They were also making sure that all the show wagons were ready to be loaded on the train for the trip north.

At the cars, "Hamburger Jack" Burslem, head of the show porters, and his men were preparing all the state rooms, bunk beds, and cooking areas of the sleepers on the circus train. Finally, groceries had to be stored in areas where porters prepared night meals for the passengers in their cars.

I was at winter quarters on the day in February when Paul Eagles, the new General Agent, arrived from his home in California. He was a tall, wide shouldered, handsome man and always impeccably dressed. At one time he was an executive on the Al G. Barnes Circus. I was introduced to Mr. Eagles by Rudy Bundy and



Second center pole goes up at Canton, Ohio on July 5, 1955. Sverre O. Braathen photo used with permission from Illinois State University's Special Collections, Milner Library.

Edna Antes. Little did I know that I would be working for him at his New York office at the Paramount Hotel during the 1956 season.

Eagles was soon off to New York because the billing crew, under the direction of John Brassil was ready to bill the metropolitan New York area. Clyde Carleton, a tall slender man, was in charge of the



Local kids spreading the big top canvas at Canton, July 5, 1955. Sverre O. Braathen photo used with permission from Illinois State University's Special Collections, Milner Library.

banner brigade. Leon Pickett and Lorin "Doc" Hall were ahead as contracting agents, booking later towns and cities.

Hugo Schmidt and Smokey Jones were in charge of the elephant herd and they had their hands full. They were assisted by Benny White and Joe Grassi. Veteran elephant man Louis Reed was brought out of retirement from his home in upstate New York to train ten of the young punks while Hugo and Smokey trained the others. These men worked long and difficult hours.

Claire and Tony Conway from the Washington, D.C. area visited Sarasota for a few days during rehearsals. I was pleased to finally meet them, as Claire was the author of one my favorite books, *We Fell in Love with the Circus*, written under the name Claire Hallard Fawcett. Her book was full of great photographs of circus performers taken in the backyard. They were on hand on February 20 when a crowd of over 800 visitors attended the afternoon rehearsal.

In March Fred Bradna, the long-time Equestrian Director, passed away at age 83 in Sarasota. He was survived by his loving wife Ella, a performer noted for her Act Beautiful which was featured on the show for many seasons. The Bradnas were true circus royalty. Mr. Bradna was forced to retire as the result of an accident during a severe storm in Dallas, Texas in 1945. He had been on the show for over forty years.

Before leaving for the Garden, it was announced that former clown and writer Bill Balantine would be with the show taking care of on the lot public relations. We also learned that Amelia Adler, wife of "King of the Clowns" Felix Adler, would be clowning along with her husband.

The run from Sarasota to the Mott Haven Railroad Yards in the Bronx was 1,323 miles over a number of different rail lines. The day we left Sarasota, the local priest blessed the train and its passengers and a large crowd of locals, including retired circus performers, were there to see us off.

I was excited to be with the show as the long circus train headed north to New York. It was a thrilling experience. I stayed awake as long as I could, in my bunk, looking out of my window at the passing Florida and Georgia landscape. Later, when I awoke from a good sleep, we were in South Carolina and heading toward North Carolina and eventually the railroad yards of Washington, D.C. Our porter cooked tasty hamburgers, hot chili, and made corn beef sandwiches, all of which I enjoyed. In the morning, I had the usual bacon, scrambled eggs, and fried potatoes along with hot coffee.

After a brief layover in Washington, we headed north across the Delaware River to Philadelphia and then on to New York. We arrived in New York late in the night but I do not know the time as I was sleeping. We were in the Bronx at the Mott Haven Yard which was near the Grand Concourse, just south of Yankee Stadium.

In the morning, I met Doc Higgins at the horse cars and asked if I could ride one horse and lead two on the walk to the Garden. He was happy to have my help, as he knew that I was a proud veteran of the ring stock department, class of 1953. It was a thrill to ride a circus horse up the streets of Manhattan to 49th Street, into the back door of Madison Square Garden, and then down the ramp to the basement stable area.

After all the stock was settled into the Garden, bedded down, fed and watered, Doc and I got a ride back to the train. We wanted to bring our suitcases to the Hotel Capitol on 50th Street and 8th Avenue which was almost across from the Garden. At that time hotel rates were three dollars a night for a single room and five for a double. It was a comfortable hotel, I should add. There was also a



Clowns Amelia and Felix Adler at Toledo, Ohio, July 4, 1955. Sverre O. Bratthen photo used with permission from Illinois State University's Special Collections, Milner Library.

Greyhound Bus Station nearby.

With the show opening on March 30, a television rehearsal was scheduled for March 28. The only thing I remember about the rehearsal was that it went on forever, mostly because of the antics of guest star Milton Berle. He used a small press office, just across from where I was working. I could see all his antics and I was not impressed. He had a crowd of hangers on with him and he was completely impressed by himself.

On March 31, a benefit for the Mike Todd Memorial was held for the Arthritis Foundation of New York. Twenty-five thousand were packed in the Garden that evening. Berle was the guest ringmaster and he constantly delayed the show. I remember also seeing Sammy Davis, Jr. and crooner Rudy Vallee, who were both appearing on Broadway. The highlight of the evening came when Marilyn Monroe rode into the arena on a pink elephant. The audience went wild for her. I was lucky enough to be in the Garden office when the star came in the Garden. She looked beautiful in her showgirl costume. After that night Marilyn came to the circus several times with children. She would sit, unrecognized in Johnny North's box, wearing a scarf over her head, dark glasses and a beautiful camel hair coat. In 1955 Monroe was the biggest star in the world. Photos of her at the circus were flashed all over the world and created huge publicity.

Pat Valdo, the long time Performance Director, was noted for keeping older performers on the payroll, long after their performing days, as members of clown alley. It was a surprise when a talented young clown, Chuck Burnes, joined the oldsters. He was a good addition to our alley and most believe that Valdo hired him not only because of his clowning talents but because he could run fast in the clown gags. He could certainly move faster than the great Arthur Burson or Paul Wenzel, two of the old timers.

On April 1, two performances were given to benefit summer day camps for children from East Harlem. They were sponsored by the James Weldon Johnson Conference Center. Johnson was a famous black writer and diplomat.

I was posted at the desk just outside the office and greeted everyone who came into the 49th Street stage door. I worked with



Ticket wagon on midway at Pittsburgh, July 7, 1955. This was first season reserved seats were \$4.00. Sverre O. Braathen photo used with permission from Illinois State University's Special Collections, Milner Library.



As he loved the circus he missed a lot of school that spring. He made believe that he was "with it" and he fooled circus folks at the Garden and the security staff as well. A tall handsome young man, he fit right in with the folks at the Garden back door. His new circus friends were always happy to see him arrive.

This was to be a special day, however. After the elephant

Men's rest room wagon at Pittsburgh, July 6, 1955. Braathen noted that the wagon was "a tremendous improvement over the former type of rest rooms." Sverre O. Braathen photo used with permission from Illinois State University's Special Collections, Milner Library.

a ticket seller from New York known as the "Sheik." He was an authentic Broadway type character right out of a Damon Runyon story.

One night Conrad Nagle, a silent movie star and one of the founders of the Academy Awards, came in with Rudy Vallee. They both had beautiful women by their sides. Another night we received word that Christine Jorgensen was coming. She was widely known as one of the first people to have sex reassignment surgery. This man who became a beautiful woman had created quite a sensation in this country and around the world. Many in our clown alley were anxious to meet her after the show.

One afternoon Eleanor Roosevelt came in with two or three of her grandchildren. It was a thrill to see the former First Lady of the United States. The grandchildren came several times to see the circus that spring.

When he was on holiday from his prep school, John Ringling North II attended the show and as I remember he loved to hang around the Garden basement where the menagerie was on display as well as the sideshow. I remember seeing him many times with Ted Sato, the show photographer, and the lovely Daisy Doll.

One highlight of my time at the door came one afternoon when Mr. and Mrs. Frank Wirth came in to pick up their tickets. Mrs. Wirth, of course, was the sensational bareback rider May Wirth. She was a center ring performer on the Ringling show and all over the world from the 1910s to the 1930s.

Walter Yong could not work in the family hand balancing act because of New York laws and his young age. His brother Johnny and sisters Charlotte and Evelyn carried on without him. The act was a huge success. Walter was a popular youngster on the show.

During the Garden run, Bob Dover, Assistant Performance Director, became ill with appendicitis and was out for a time recovering after surgery at the Belvedere Hotel.

On April 16, the staff at the office received the news that Cap Curtis, long time Ringling big top boss, had passed away at his home in Mississippi. About that time *Billboard* announced that two visitors to the Ringling Show were Gordon Turner and Zsa Zsa Gabor.

On April 17, Peter Kinosh, a high school freshman from Bristol, Connecticut, took the bus to the Garden to see his circus friends.

production number *Mama's in the Park*, a group of punk elephants saw that the back door of the building was open and suddenly they were off and running. Pete Kinosh was standing there with Benny White, a bull man, and saw all the action. I was in the Garden office

and suddenly heard a huge rumble as little punks ran through the tunnels below the Garden seating. It was loud and clear that the elephants were on the move. Punks were chained in pairs by collars and they headed up the ramp to the open Garden backdoor. They turned by the corner of 49th and ran north on Eighth Avenue, right past a popular prize fighter bar, Mickey "the Toy Bulldog" Walker's.

One can imagine the surprise of bar patrons, looking out on the avenue, and seeing pink, green, and blue baby elephants on the run. Louie Reed, Hugh, and Benny were fast in pursuit and finally captured the youngsters before anyone was hurt.



Bob Dover, assistant to performance director Pat Valdo, in Chicago, July 16, 1954. Sverre O. Braathen photo used with permission from Illinois State University's Special Collections, Milner Library.

Pete was there to see it all.

Later in April, Merle Evans and his twenty-five piece circus band played the *Wedding March* as 56 year old Emmett Kelly married Elvira Gephardt in the center ring between shows. The circus band also played *Happy Days are Here Again* and *Prisoner of Love*. Press agent Frank Braden made sure that news cameras were there to shoot the wedding pictures and the event made all the papers and television programs.

Near the end of the run, Takeo Usui fell to the Garden floor while doing his slide for life on a "Steeply Sloping Strand." He was out for several weeks. Soon all of us were ready to leave the Garden and go on the road.

North to Boston from Madison Square Garden

On Sunday night May 8 the big show jumped 313 miles on the New York, New Haven & Hartford and the Boston & Maine lines to the Boston Garden. We showed there from Monday, May 9 through Sunday, May 15. The Boston Garden was a 15,000 seat arena and there were thirteen performances with seats prices ranging from \$1.50 to a \$4.00 dollar top.

The show arrived late because of a broken draw bar on one of the cars resulting in repairs at the Worcester, Massachusetts rail yard. It was a cold, nasty day as the flats were unloaded and the wagons began hauling show equipment into the building. Riggers, light men, and prop men all began quickly unloading the wagons and installing the show. While all this was going on Rudy Bundy, Edna Antes and I checked into the hotel that adjoined the Garden. I only remember leaving the building once for the entire run of the show. We were busy assisting Theo Forstall and Bobby DeLochte at the box-office.

Main entrance to show at fairgrounds lot in Detroit, July 3, 1955. Sverre O. Braathen photo used with permission from Illinois State University's Special Collections, Milner Library.





Franz Furtner, better known as Unus, the great hand balancer, of whom Sverre Braathen wrote: "He is a very good performer and has wonderful showmanship." Photo taken at Detroit, July 2, 1955. Sverre O. Braathen photo used with permission from Illinois State University's Special Collections, Milner Library.

the net and collapsing.

During the Boston run the show had a record gate, taking in well over \$250,000 at the box office. After the final Boston Garden performance the show loaded out for a 536 mile run to Baltimore. For this run, I was lucky enough to have a bunk in a car across from the great clown Otto Griebing. I admired the funny man with the raspy voice and slight German accent.

We traveled west across Massachusetts on the Boston and Maine; then onto the New York, New Haven and Hartford; then onto the Leigh and Hudson; and finally to the Pennsylvania Railroad. The first day out we crossed the Hudson River at Poughkeepsie and landed in the Maybrook railroad yards on the west side of the river. Here we had a feed and water stop in the small town of Maybrook, New York. Suddenly the town was full of circus folks from Johann

Part of the Ringling-Barnum side show banner line at Detroit, July 3, 1955. Sverre O. Braathen photo used with permission from Illinois State University's Special Collections, Milner Library.

The show was doing excellent business and spectators were thrilled with Trevor Bale as he presented his Royal Bengal Tigers, the riding antics of Guistino Loyal, the unbelievable equilibristic exploits of Unus, and the Palacios flying trapeze troupe. All this and the great John Ringling North music played by Merle Evans and the Ringling band made for an exciting presentation.

Show personnel were shocked on the morning of May 14 to learn that veteran cookhouse steward George Blood had passed quietly away in his hotel room. He had been with the show for thirty-one years and took over the cookhouse at the death of Ollie Webb in 1937. At one performance veteran flyer Billy Ward took a nasty spill, falling into

Petursson, the Viking Giant, to the Harry Doll family.

Luckily, I had movie film and I was able to capture scenes of the town's visitors. I also shot all the of the ring stock being unloaded, fed and watered by the stock cars. I even have film of Albert Powell, Noyelles Burkhart, Scott Hall, Otto Griebing, Doc Higgins and myself. It was a memorable, sunny afternoon.

We arrived in Baltimore early on Wednesday morning, May 18. When our busses took us to the circus lot, out on Pulaski Highway, there was the new big top, the new menagerie tent, and the new side show tent to greet us. It was an immense site. We knew that we were finally leaving the confines of the Gardens and were really out on the sawdust trail. Clown Albert White threw a great party in clown alley for his local family and friends. Ernie Burch and Gene Lewis camped it up at the night show.

While we were in Baltimore, Paul Eagles was out in Chicago and his men, Leon Pickett, Doc Hall, and Ira Watkins, were booking Illinois towns. Our show did fair business but many felt that business was off because of the new promotion policies.

Thursday, May 19, Washington, D.C.: On the night of May 18, the circus was packed up in Baltimore, loaded on the flats and stock cars and moved forty-three miles south on the Pennsylvania Railroad to our nation's capital.

Actually this was the first full move of the entire circus for the season. Everything went well, considering the shortage of veteran working men, especially rugged ushers who provided much of the power to move the seat wagons and sections of the big top.

Now, the show was to rely on lady usherettes at the "come in" to seat the public. Some management felt that the regular ushers were skimming money by quietly selling reserved seats to patrons not content with seats in the "blues" at each end of the tent.

This was partially true but, in the ushers' defense, they too had to make money to stay on the show and they did provide lots of valuable manpower. While the show was in progress most of the usherettes were busy working their acts and in production numbers.



The show needed manpower when problems would arise so the lack of real ushers made for a dangerous situation.

The 1955 route book lists eleven male ushers working for the show. In both 1953 and 1954 there were 41 ushers on staff. They were rugged men who took care of patrons, provided safety, and at night helped move the show. Kinkers and usherettes could not do all the jobs. As a result of this ill-conceived policy, the circus had trouble moving from town to town, day after day, and lost many performances because of late arrivals.

We played Washington for four days and did fair business. Old timers complained that the new-fangled advertising policies were not good for the show. One old clown laughed and said, "A circus needs posters, peanuts, and popcorn sacks to make money; with that you get the big people with the cash." The Ringling show needed posters all over town, not promotions at grocery stores and TV ads sponsored by General Foods.

Monday, May 23 through Sunday, May 29, Philadelphia: The circus headed north out of the Capital to the City of Brotherly Love and the great show town of Philadelphia. We played a lot near the Timken ball bearing works and there was the James E. Strates carnival midway out ahead of the show. It was hot, rainy, and muggy most of the time.

My pal, songwriter Irving Caesar, visited the show to see how the music was going and he stopped to see me working in a ticket wagon. Pat Valdo, the Performance Director, now realized that the Nerveless Nocks act was not as impressive in the big top as it had been in the Garden. Their poles had to be shortened for the tent.

Everyday while I was selling tickets a local policeman stood by the ticket window moving the customers on. I soon learned that he was expecting a tip from me at the end of his hours. The Fire Marshall did not go for the turnstiles at the main entrance of the circus. They were too dangerous to be used in his city. The show gave in to the Marshall's demands.

Morris Fisher, brother of Paul and Maxie Fisher, passed away during the Philly stand. Louie Reed left for Sarasota, and head ticket seller Bill McGough left for his Four Paw Ranch near Mesquite, Texas.

Monday, May 30, Scranton, Pennsylvania; May 31, Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania: At the end of May, we jumped 207 miles north to Scranton in the heart of coal mining country where we had a strong matinee and a weak night show. The following day in Wilkes-Barre we had a late matinee due to railroad problems. The sidings were not extensive enough to handle the show's trains. We did fair at the matinees and three quarter houses at night. Once again old timers

complained about the lack of show paper plastered around the towns.

Wednesday, June 1, Allentown, Pennsylvania: As in the previous two cities we came in on the CNJ railroad after a 102 mile jump. The show looked fresh and colorful with all the new blue canvas at the Allentown Fairgrounds. Robert Good and his son were on hand to greet us. We were at eighty percent capacity that night. Rumors were now flying around the show that it would not be playing Madison Square Garden the next season. What was going to happen? No one seemed to have an answer to that important question. Joseph J. McCarthy, Superintendent of Wardrobe, suffered a heart attack and after a short stay in the hospital returned to Sarasota. His duties were taken over by Jean Carson and Freddy White.



Elephants in train wardrobe for Holiday production number, probably Detroit, July 3, 1955. Sverre O. Braathen photo used with permission from Illinois State University's Special Collections, Milner Library.

Thursday, June 2-4 Reading, Lebanon, and Lancaster, Pennsylvania: With a thirty-six and two, twenty-eight mile jumps on the Reading Railroad we made these three Pennsylvania towns. In one of these towns the news was received from winter quarters that Lotus, the old hippo, had passed on. She had trooped many seasons on the circus.

Sunday, June 5, Woodbury, New Jersey: We arrived in town after a 78 mile jump on the PRR. Business was fair, but there were lots of

complaints about the absence of one half price tickets for children. The circus-going public did not like the change in show policy regarding the price for children's tickets. This policy caused a lot of heat for the ticket sellers working in the wagons.

June 6, 7, 8, Wilmington, Delaware; Bridgeton and Red Bank, New Jersey: We had relatively short jumps on the PRR, B&O, CNJ lines for these cities. All the work crews were now in fine working order with all the ups and downs along the route. The setting up the seat wagons was, however, going slowly with the shortage of male working ushers. The show needed strong "bible throwers" in this department. Candy butchers and kinkers working for "cherry pie" were doing their best.

June 9 and 10, Newark, New Jersey: After an 86 mile move on the PRR, we came into the yards on time. There were lots of men and boys waiting for us who were willing to work for a free ticket to the matinee. This made the spreading of the canvas, raising the side poles, and eventually tossing bibles and setting up chairs go quickly. The "punk pushers," who directed these men and boys, did a fine job. From the lot, you could look over at the skyline of New York and recall the Garden engagement.

Saturday, June 10, East Paterson New Jersey: We used the PRR and Erie lines for our 12 mile jump. Lots of performers and workers

hitched rides to this city and were at the sidings to greet the trains as they moved into the yards. Again we were close to Manhattan and had many visitors, who had seen the show in the Garden, and wanted to see the circus under the new big top. This would prove to be a new experience for many of them. Before I opened the ticket wagon I had a chat with Dyer Reynolds, who worked a midway novelty stand with Louie Gustow. He was from New England and was a great circus fan.

Sunday, June 12, Poughkeepsie, New York: We jumped 65 miles north on the Erie and New Haven roads, along the eastern side of the Hudson River valley, before crossing the railroad bridge into the Poughkeepsie yards. It was a rainy morning as we arrived but the cookhouse was up and serving hotcakes, sausage, and hot coffee for breakfast. I was at the ticket wagon at nine and able to sell matinee tickets to early arrivals. Gordon Turner of Schenectady was at the lot with his mom taking lots of pictures of show wagons. My aunt and uncle were also there for a short visit.

The crews had to work hard tearing down the seat wagons and with some difficulty they were hauled off the lot for the trip to the waiting runs. The muddy lot and the cool weather made it difficult to roll canvas that night. It was well after midnight when the final wagons were heading toward the runs. A day like this on the show separated the men from the boys. "First of Mays" became a bit discouraged and sometimes went down the road without the big show.

June 13, 14, 15, Bridgeport, New Haven, and New London, Connecticut: Here we were playing cities on the main line of the New Haven Railroad. On Monday we were in Barnum's hometown of Bridgeport. As usual, we did good business with lots of old time circus visitors. In the backyard, there were many folks recalling the days when they were with the show. Curtis, our waiter in the cookhouse, had family members as guests.

In New Haven on Tuesday, John Ringling North's Yale friends were on hand to check out his latest circus production. They were not disappointed with the 1955 edition of the Greatest Show on Earth.

On Wednesday we were in New London, a seacoast town with a large Portuguese population. It was always a good show town and on the route of many circuses over the years. When I went to the band top to put on my uniform, Merle Evans was busy telling band members stories, reading his mail, and at the same time visiting with a few circus fans. Merle, one of the most popular men, had many visitors. Many of his pals were windjammers.

Thursday, June 16, Worcester, Massachusetts: A 72 mile jump on the New Haven line got us into Worcester. On the bus to the lot, Jakie Besser told me about this town which was noted for the building of excellent prefabricated diners. Diners were once made from horse drawn wagons, later old trolley cars and then into the famous Greek diners we have today. All of this started in the city of Worcester. It was about this time that juggler Joe Bisbini announced the engagement of his talented daughter to Bob Dover.

Friday, June 17, Providence, Rhode Island; Saturday, June 18 Newport Rhode Island: Jakie Besser insisted that Providence was the toughest town in America to play. He told me of gangs breaking down the sidewalls of the tent and storming into the seats. I was really worried but thankfully we did not have any trouble. The show

had not played there during the last five years. We had a three quarter house at the matinee and a nearly full house that night. It was a tight lot and the menagerie was side walked.

In Newport we did fair business. I played the town with Cole Bros. Circus 58 years later and shopped at a Walmart store which is now on the old circus lot. In both cities we were on the New Haven Railroad for short jumps.

Sunday, June 19, Nashua, New Hampshire: We moved the show 133 miles on New Haven

and Boston & Maine lines to reach this small New England city. The show actually was not scheduled to play here, but Milton Pickman insisted that the date be played. There were no billposters and very little publicity and we played to an empty matinee and night show. Performers and working men were upset as they really were looking forward to a Sunday off.

Concession men did not even bother to work the night show, but just moved on to Concord, the next town.

Monday, June 20, Concord, New Hampshire: A thirty-four mile move on the same railroads brought us into Concord. The weather was fine and we had a half house at the matinee and about the same that evening. In the morning, before I went to my ticket wagon, I stepped into the big top to watch the riggers hard at work securing the trapeze cables, and the electrical crew mounting the show spot lights. At the same time prop hands were setting the ring curbs, and placing props where they were ready to be used. All of this was being done while seat men were hastily erecting the over 9,000 seats.

Tuesday, June 21, Montpelier, Vermont: The Boston & Maine and the Central Vermont lines moved us into the city. The jump was 132 miles and we arrived on time. It rained in the morning, making the spotting of some wagons difficult, and it rained again during the



Clown band from Mama's in the Park elephant production number, Pittsburgh, July 8, 1955. Sverre O. Braathen photo used with permission from Illinois State University's Special Collections, Milner Library.

matinee. Both performances were lightly attended and Pat Valdo ordered a "John Robinson" or quick performance for the night show. With the show over early, we still were very late getting off the lot due to wet grass and mud. Truck drivers found it hard to get traction while pulling heavy wagons out to the road.

Wednesday June 22, Burlington, Vermont: We came in on the Central Vermont Railroad after a run of forty miles. We were moved by steam engines on this run. It was not a long haul to the Essex Junction Fairgrounds where we played. My aunts, Iva and Frances, visited from Salem, New York. We had one half houses for both shows. There were storm warnings during the night show. Between shows all personnel had to fill out manifest papers as our next move was into Canada.

June 23 through June 26, Montreal, Quebec, Canada: A short run on the Central Vermont line and then on to the Canadian National road brought us to Montreal for a stand of four days. Personnel were looking forward to playing this cosmopolitan city. We had time to go to restaurants, do some shopping, and visit with friends. For this stand, the show was announced in French. It took time for tickets sellers to get use to Canadian money and ticket prices. Most days we had one half houses in the afternoon and three quarter houses at night.

June 27 to 30, Bellville, Toronto, Hamilton, and Sarnia, Ontario, Canada: Our moves were uneventful on the great Canadian National Railroad, as the show moved west toward Detroit.

In Hamilton at the matinee, Freddy Freeman and his lovely wife entertained lots of family members and friends. Clowns Frankie Saluto and Ronnie Daniels were still drawing laughs with their bunny out of the egg routine.

Friday, July 1 to Sunday, July 3, Detroit: We arrived at the fairgrounds lot in good time and the show was easily unloaded at the fairground sidings. We came in on the CN and GT lines after a

62 mile move. I worked the matinee in the pass booth with Miss Hilda Burkhart and she told me that her family, the Nelson family of acrobats, was on the bill at the first Shrine Circus ever. It was held in Detroit. Sverre O. Braathen, noted circus fan and photographer, visited for several days. He was entertained by Edna Antes at the cookhouse and later took lots of 35mm slides of performers in the backyard.

After the evening performance, many of the culture lovers on the show could be found in downtown Detroit at one of the famous burlesque shows. I went there with Ted Sato, Deiter, Alfred,

and some of our clown friends. The show played to half houses on the matinees and three quarter houses at night.

Monday, July 4, Toledo, Ohio: It was a short 59 mile jump into town on the New York Central. The cookhouse put on a huge feast for all the personnel on the show. The famous circus party was held in the big top between shows and Maggie Smith won the women's sack race and Joe Nock won the men's division. Jimmy Armstrong won the midget sack race. Trevor Bale and Gene Lewis did a burlesque of the Cordon whip act. Otto Griebeling and Guistino Loyal did a comedy routine that was a huge hit. These men were two of the funniest performers on the show. Clown Dennis Stevens did a comedy contortionist routine that created lots of laughter.

About this time, we all learned the famed radio and TV press department head Bev Kelley left the show because of the new press policies inaugurated by Milton Pickman. Bev returned to his home in Delaware, Ohio and after a short rest went out ahead of Broadway productions. No one was pleased with this change and most people could see bad days ahead for the circus. Bill Fields, the famous and popular New York press agent, published an open letter to Ringling management highly critical of the Pickman policies. Show folks knew that fewer posters, fewer passes, and fewer agents ahead of the circus meant hard times.

July 5, Canton, Ohio: We had a run of 159 miles before we arrived in the PRR yards here. All the wagons arrived on the lot late and the big top crew was very late in placing the center poles, driving the hundreds of stakes, unloading and spreading the canvas, lacing all the sections, and finally dragging the canvas and tying the huge sections to the bailing rings. Lateness meant that the show blew the matinee. Lot lice stayed on the lot while Bobby Hasson brought them into the side show to see Sealo, the Doll Family, Frieda Pushnik and the other attractions. Hasson kept grinding until after the evening show started. We did a three quarter house that night.

July 7-9, Pittsburgh: We were again on the PRR for 113 miles. We played a lot next to an old and famous amusement park, Kennywood Park, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday which brought us fair houses in the afternoons and the same at night. Performers and working people were becoming discouraged with a large lack of confidence in management, especially the promotion end of the



Trevor Bale worked a tiger act in the center ring. Photo taken in Pittsburgh, July 7, 1955. Sverre O. Braathen photo used with permission from Illinois State University's Special Collections, Milner Library.



Flooded lot in Mansfield, Ohio, July 14, 1955. Sverre O. Braathen photo used with permission from Illinois State University's Special Collections, Milner Library.



Ringling-Barnum on the Cleveland lakefront, July 12, 1955. Sverre O. Braathen photo used with permission from Illinois State University's Special Collections, Milner Library.

show. At night a few of us toured the amusement park and enjoyed some of the rides, especially the famed wooden coaster.

Saturday, July 9, Youngstown, Ohio: Once again we were on the PRR line for a 68 mile run. Show arrived in good time, great breakfast at cookhouse before starting work in the wagon. Good summer weather, fine lot, 3000 at the matinee and a great house that night. I met a few friends from Hiram College that night and was able to get them fine seats for the performance.

Sunday, July 10, Akron, Ohio: Once again 63 miles on the PRR line to Akron. We had a one half house at matinee and three quarter at night. I had a moment to see Paul Fritz work his lion act in the first ring and Trevor Bale work the tigers in the center ring. I can still hear Trevor asking a tiger to go home and when the animal didn't move Trevor took of his hat, bowed, and said to the animal, "Will you please go home," and finally the animal obeyed and walked slowly into the chute. The audience responded with huge applause at this moment.

Old timers on the show recalled when the circus played the Rubber Bowl stadium a few weeks after the terrible 1944 fire in Hartford, Connecticut. The "the professor," clown Paul Wenzel, was there and told me about the tour after the fire. This happened under Robert Ringling's management.

July 11-13, Cleveland: In the early hours of Monday we were hauled by the PRR thirty-nine miles to Cleveland. Once again our lot was the parking area of the Cleveland Indians baseball stadium. The show looked huge on this lot on the edge of Lake Erie. I was able to take movies of Emmett Kelly, Otto Griebling, Paul Jung, and Freddy Freeman standing by the sidewall of the big top. There was a strong breeze coming off the lake. Clown alley was all abuzz over a feature story about Chuck Burnes that appeared on the front page of his home town paper, the *Waterbury Sun Republican*. Chuck was a popular "first of May" clown.

July 14, Mansfield, Ohio: One hundred eleven miles on the PRR

brought us to Mansfield. That morning Erma Pushnik, Lawson's secretary, told me that my old ring stock boss Frank Selock was well enough to return home to Sarasota. Frank had broken his leg in three places when a stud horse reared and threw him the year before. He had spent a year in recovery in Waterbury, Connecticut. Frank was a superb boss and I had enjoyed working for him during the summer of 1953.

That afternoon, I had lunch with Edna and Hilda before working the pass booth. Again we noticed that there were few customers exchanging passes for tickets to the show. As a result we had a small matinee and again a light evening show.

Friday, July 15, Dayton, Ohio: We moved 114 miles on the Erie and PRR lines into Dayton. We played the fairgrounds near the heart of the city and across from the National Cash Register plant. I couldn't help but recall how sad I had been in 1953 when I had to leave the show there to return to Hiram College.

Workers at the plant filled the windows looking out on the backyard of the show. They saw all the floats entering the top for the *Holidays* spec and all the baby elephants being dressed for the *Mama's in the Park* production number. Later they saw the bulls being dressed for the finale *Rainbow 'Round the World*.

July 16 and 17, Cincinnati: Willis E. Lawson, the popular show manager, celebrated a birthday here. Between shows some of his friends took him out for a celebration dinner. In the backyard, there was talk of an early closing if business did not improve. *Billboard* described the business as "spotty." Henry North denied a disagreement with his brother over the Pickman press policies but friends of Buddy North knew that there was friction between the brothers. Once again we were in and out on the PRR line. We again had less than a half house at the matinee and a less than three quarter house that night. The circus-going public made it clear that they wanted one half price tickets for children. Ticket sellers were getting constant beefs.



Cages in open-air menagerie at Canton, Ohio, July 5, 1955. Sverre O. Braathen photo used with permission from Illinois State University's Special Collections, Milner Library.

Monday, July 18 and Tuesday, July 19, Anderson and Logansport, Indiana: With a 124 mile jump into Anderson and a 60 mile move into Logansport we were able to be on time both days. Again business was only fair at all the performances. In Logansport, Noyelles Burkhart entertained his dad and brothers Ken and William. We were now into hot summer weather.

July 20 to 22, Danville, Peoria, and Champaign, Illinois: With one move on the Wabash and two on the NYC system we played these three cities. Weather was hot and dry and performers were weary. We were all looking forward to a Chicago run. Sometimes when Otto was ill, Guistino Loyal did the boxing routine with Freddy Freeman. It was one of the bright clown spots of the show.

July 23 through 31, Chicago, Illinois: A 127 mile jump on the Illinois Central brought the show into the Chicago yards. It was a short haul to Soldier Field where we played. I was up early and took movies of show wagons being unloaded at the runs.

City officials and other service people who helped the show were upset with the new pass policy. This situation made it difficult for Burkhart and his assistant Walter Rairden to deal with city officials who expected the usual generous pass policy. The weather did not cooperate as it was hot every afternoon and did not cool off until late at night. I was busy selling advance sale tickets for all the performances and had to be there at 9:00 a.m. to open the wagon.

Jack Besser and his wife came up from Sarasota, and I was able to visit with them between shows. Just like in earlier cities business was off for the Chicago run and word came down that Ringling was being sued by Chicago Show Print.

I was able to take many movies of backyard activities between shows. Three long-time Ringling employees left during the Chicago run. Timekeepers William Webster and Joseph Dunn left for Sarasota, and chief of police William Reynolds left for his home in New England.

John Ringling North had postponed his annual trip to Europe to be with the show and his brother Henry was on the lot every day. It was obvious that Michael Burke, the new General Manager needed help; the rumor going around the show was that he was in over his head. Ringling's business was way off in the city with less than a thousand spectators at the matinees and not much stronger at night. The candy butchers were not pleased as lack of business cut deep into their pockets. Everyone placed the blame squarely on Milton

Pickman's shoulders and his policies. Changes had to be made if the "big one" was to continue the tour.

August 1, 2, 3, Beloit, Madison, and La Crosse, Wisconsin: With runs of about 100 miles each on the C&NW roads we were hoping to be back in the black. In Beloit new tickets were distributed by Edna Antes with the top reserve price ticket \$3.00. The \$4.00 ticket was gone and general admission seats were now \$1.50. If there was a child in the group, all the general admission seats were then \$1.00. It was felt that now maybe we would do some business.

Thursday, August 4, St. Paul, Minnesota: We came into this city after a 132 mile jump on the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy Railroad. Up early, I went to the downtown sale and met with advance ticket seller Harry Bert. He was one of my favorite people on the show and was a good pal of Theo, Bobby, and Edna Antes. Harry lived in Chicago and was a classy gentleman. I had lunch at the drug store where Harry had the sale and then took a cab to the lot. It was a nice circus day and I had a fine visit with a circus fan who was a retired Greyhound Bus driver. I don't remember his name but I remember him, even after over fifty years.

Between shows Edna and I ate at the cookhouse. I started selling reserved seat tickets in the yellow wagon that evening. When the come in was over, I heard the voice of Count Nicholas make his usual announcements and then introduce Trevor Bale and his Royal Bengal Tigers; then Paul Fritz's lion act. I could hear Merle and his windjammers play the usual music for the acts, but then suddenly I heard music played that did not fit in the show. I knew then and there that there were problems. Count Nicholas abruptly announced that everyone was to leave the big top and that ticket money would be refunded. Edna Antes was then standing outside my ticket wagon and told me that I had to stay and make refunds for any tickets that were presented to me.

I could not believe what was happening. Chico Guzman, a butcher friend of mine, came over to the window and told me that all the prop hands were on strike because Frank McCloskey, Willis E. Lawson, and Walter Kernan had been fired by North and Michael Burke. Property boss Robert Reynolds asked his crew of over 40 men to strike the show. They followed the bosses' orders as Bob Reynolds was a popular boss noted for taking care of his men.

I had to stay in the wagon as did other ticket sellers putting up with unhappy patrons until late that evening. Theo and Bobby De Lochte made sure we had the cash to care for the patrons.



Walter Kernan, Dayton, Ohio, July 15, 1955, not long before he was fired in St. Paul, Minnesota. Sverre O. Braathen photo used with permission from Illinois State University's Special Collections, Milner Library.

Edna, Theo, Bobby and I met with others in the back of the silver wagon and wondered what was going to happen. Rudy Bundy was also there and his usually red face was as white as a ghost. The show had to move that night into Minneapolis yet no one was lifting a hand to help move the show. Michael Burke was at a loss as to what could be done.

Nena Evans told Burke that there was only one man on the show who could get us out of town, as everyone respected him. That man was Noyelles Burkhart.

Nena was right. Burke left the red wagon and went to the white wagon to get Noyelles and ask for his advice and assistance. Noyelles sent word to the cars and asked all the performers to return to the lot to assist with the tear down. He also asked Ring Stock boss Harold Miller to bring his men. Miller was a Cole show man and always loyal to Burkhart.

It was late that night when Noyelles entered the big top, stood by the center ring, and threw his suit coat down onto the ring curb for all to see. He then rolled up his shirt sleeves for the gathered circus personnel to see and said, "Folks, this is our show and we are going to move it right now." Butchers, performers, workingmen, started tearing down the seats, tossing bibles, and preparing the seat wagons to be pulled out of the tent. Men and women started taking down the lighting, pulling and rolling up electrical cable, and carrying props to their proper wagons.

Performers took care of their own props. As the seat wagons were being loaded bulls came into the tent with their handlers and started lowering quarter poles and loading them onto pole wagons. There was a new spirit on the show under Noyelles's leadership. No one was happy with the management changes but it was still their show and work had to be done. Meeks, our ticket wagon man said, "Bill this is starting to get more like the great Cole show every day."

After a heavy rain it finally was time to drop the big top to the ground and canvas men and performers started unlacing and folding canvas, rolling it into large rolls to be loaded. Stakes were being pulled; wagons were beginning to move to the runs.

Late that night, I was in the 369 car with Theo, Edna, Bobby DeLochte, and Jimmy and Sally Ringling talking about the events of the day. Jimmy was worried about the future of the show and of course the management of his cousin JRN. He was a part of the 49% of show ownership that was not happy with North's management.

Everyone there felt that McCloskey, Lawson, and Kernan should not have been fired. We all wondered what the next day would

bring.

In the early morning hours, we moved out of St. Paul for the run to Minneapolis. Performers and workers were weary and worried about the future. Burkhart was in command along with newly appointed Manager Lloyd Morgan. Morgan, like Noyelles, was a well-respected man who had been the Lot Superintendent with the show for several years.

Friday, August 5, and Saturday, August 6, Minneapolis: After a ten mile move on the Chicago and Northwestern we arrived for a two day stand. It was a clear sunny day when I arrived on the lot for an early breakfast. The hot coffee, scrambled eggs and bacon never tasted better. Edna was with me and after our meal I went with her to assist in the opening of her ticket distribution wagon. I helped her prepare

the bundles of tickets for the matinee and evening performance. Edna was saddened by the loss of "Mr. McCloskey and Lawson," but she told me it was best for us to stay with the show.

When the ticket wagons were spotted I opened the yellow wagon and prepared for the daily sale.

Erma Pushnik Meyers came into the office section of the wagon and was in tears over the firing of her boss Lawson. Ted Sato and I tried to console Erma. Other ticket sellers came

by to inform me that the big top work was going slowly, as I had expected. Rigging in

the top was done by many of the performers, especially the trapeze acts. Juan, Pinito Del Oro's husband, took charge of his wife's rigging as Alex Konyot worked to rig Josephine Berosini's high wire rigging. Dick Anderson, Clayton Behee, the Palacio family and all the other flyers busily prepared their high rigging. The show was ready for a performance, all except the steel cages for the three cat acts. They would not be used until the evening performance.

Midmorning I was at the wagon selling tickets when I looked up the midway and there were Frank McCloskey, Lawson and Walter walking toward the red wagon. Lawson suddenly left the others and headed toward me as I sat in the wagon. He reached in the window, shook my hand, and said, "Bill, you love the show and have lots of friends here, so stay with the show, I will have work for you when you return to Sarasota. Marjorie and I will always have a place for you, take care and don't worry." Lawson walked away and I had tears in my eyes; it was one of my unhappiest days on the Ringling show. My loyalty was always with Lawson.

Edna and I went to dinner at the cookhouse as usual and then had a long visit in her wagon with Hilda Burkhart. Hilda told us that North had asked her husband to take over management of the show



Clown Ernie Burch and liberty horse presenter Pirkko Gerdes-Ussin kidding around in backyard in Rainbow 'Round the World spec wardrobe, Dayton, Ohio, July 15, 1955. Sverre O. Braathen photo used with permission from Illinois State University's Special Collections, Milner Library.



The Loyal Repensky riding act at Pittsburgh, July 7, 1955. Great comedic rider Guistino Loyal is in center. Sverre O. Braathen photo used with permission from Illinois State University's Special Collections, Milner Library.

but Noyelles was only willing to do so if North cut down the size of the show. JRN felt that larger was better, but Noyelles believed that a 40 car show would move better and make more money.

The evening show went well and the three opening acts included lions, tigers, and bears. Then it was time for Miss Mara on the trapeze doing her famous heal catch and later her talented brother Tonito gracefully walked the tight wire. Before long, I could hear the wonderful music of *Honolulu Bay*, while Pinito Del Oro did her high trapeze head stand as over thirty Ringling starlets did their web routine.

The workers did not have a prop top to go to for beer that day. The Miami gambler, who ran the top, "Jimmy Blue Eyes," had headed back to Miami.

We were busy in the ticket wagons and the show did great business at all of the four performances in Minneapolis. By the time the show left for our next town everyone was tired and ready for a one day stand. Dieter, Alfred, Johnny Yong and I visited at the flats before our sections left town. Even though we were worried, we were looking forward to heading west.

Heading West to Salt Lake City

Sunday, August 7, Mankato, Minnesota: We had a 95 mile run into Mankato on the C&NW and arrived on a sunny August day. I went to town to check the advance sale, enjoy lunch, and then take a cab to the lot. When I arrived back on the show grounds I checked in with Edna Antes and then headed to the yellow ticket wagon. I sold \$1.00 tickets until they were all sold out. We had a straw house on this matinee only date. Performers and working men were pleased with the greeting the little city gave us. For fun Dieter, Alfred, and I helped tear down the seat wagons on the short side of the tent. We worked with our pal Dick Anderson, catcher from the Sabrejets' flying act. As the train was being loaded I took movies of the crews hauling the heavy show wagons onto the flat cars. We pulled out around seven that evening and I took time to wash my socks and later have a bowl of chili before going to bed.

Monday, August 8, Norfolk, Nebraska: That August night we

jumped 258 miles on the C&NW across the western plains and as our train rolled along I couldn't help thinking of Willa Cather's book *Oh Pioneers*, a tale of the rugged pioneers who populated the Great Plains. I took movies of our train rolling across the landscape and the crowds that gathered in the railroad yards to see our show caravan arrive. We were in town about 9:00 a.m. I rode in a cab to town with Noyelles and Rudy Bundy. Rudy told us that JRN was staying at the local hotel and that he was to meet the boss for lunch. I went to town after the night show and had two beers with ticket seller Lee Brown. He was the husband of great aerialist

Winifred Colleano.

Back at the train, I sat on one of the flats and listened to my radio.

Tuesday, August 9, Grand Island, Nebraska: Union Pacific. For us, it seemed like it was a rough ride that night on the UP for all of the 113 miles. Our cars seemed to jump and jerk along the route and it was not a night for good sleeping. I made the local sale, ate lunch, then got back to the lot. I was looking forward to the next town, North Platte. The show did a half house in the afternoon and three quarters at night.

Wednesday, August 10, North Platte, Nebraska: We had a 131 mile jump on the UP to North Platte. When I went to town in the morning, I could see lots of signs telling visitors that this was Buffalo Bill's town and that the first performances of the Wild West Show were given there. I always admired the old scout and sometimes at night Bobby DeLochte would tell us stories of playing Buffalo Bill when he was on the Sells-Floto Circus. Bill was paid cash every night, according to Bobby.

In town, I visited a Sears to buy batteries for my portable radio. We had a railroad lot and you could see the stock cars and flats from the lot. That night I called my Uncle Ed, back in Clyde, to wish him a happy birthday.

Thursday, August 11, Cheyenne, Wyoming: The circus jumped 226 miles west on the Union Pacific to reach Cheyenne. We were now in the real west and many of the performers were now wearing cowboy hats, western shirts, and cowboy boots. Dieter, Alfred, and Johnny Yong were all duded up; we played the large Cheyenne Stampede lot. We had a slight rain in the afternoon and weather a bit cold at night. Between shows, I had a visit with Guistino Loyal and his fellow rider Enrique Suarez. I loved to talk about rosin back horses with these two accomplished circus riders. All through the 1940s, Guistino was a featured center ring riding act on the big show. For me, his horses were always the best. At the time I met him, Guistino was no longer a young man, but he was still able to do a backward somersault from horse to horse.

That night I was coming down with a cold and I couldn't wait to get to the train. All of us were looking forward to playing Denver and I



Riders about to enter big top for the Rainbow 'Round the World spec, Pittsburgh, July 6, 1955. Sverre O. Braathen photo used with permission from Illinois State University's Special Collections, Milner Library.

did not want to be ill. We had a sell out that night.

August 12 and 13, Denver: When we left the railroad yards in Cheyenne the show headed southwest and into the foothills of the Rocky Mountains. It was a 95 mile run through valleys and tunnels, and along river beds. There was a large moon high in the sky. I stood on the car platform with friends for a long time on this run just to take in the beauty of the West. I really enjoyed the cool night air, the rattle of the train, and knowing that I was with the Big Show, Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Combined Shows.

We arrived in the Denver railroad yards early in the morning. The first section, or "flying squadron," was well ahead of us and we knew that after a bus ride to the lot we could have a hearty breakfast at the cookhouse. Gene Lynch, Lee Brown, and I shared our coffee and hot cakes and made plans for our free time in the Mile High City. My uncle had told me about Denver's famous Brown Palace Hotel and it was first on my list of places to see.

DeLochte had also told me about growing up as a young man in Leadville, Colorado, moving to Denver to work at a lumber yard owned by Misters Bonfils and Tammien, who also owned the *Denver Post* newspaper and the Sells-Floto Circus. These men heard about an honest, hard-working clerk named Bobby DeLochte and quickly sent him to be their honest money man on their Floto Show. As a result Bobby spent his entire working career on circuses, mostly with the American Circus Corporation. DeLochte was a man that I greatly admired; I always have and always will admire the hardworking and honest circus man from Peru, Indiana.

On Friday and Saturday we did good business in Denver and early Saturday morning bus driver Larry Wilcox took a tour group of circus folks, mostly windjammers and performers, up in the mountains to visit the grave of Buffalo Bill. I loaned my movie camera to Alfred Burton and he and Dieter took movies of the group and Indian entertainers who were there. Dieter and Alfred were all duded up and playing like cowboys.

I got to see the Brown Palace Hotel and the State Capitol and on Friday night went to a late movie. I was hurrying into the theater and believe it or not I was a "walk away."

Sunday, August 14, En route: We left the Denver yards early in the morning and were all prepared for a 613 mile jump to Salt Lake City. We were on the Union Pacific and passed through thirty-three railroad tunnels, over the Continental Divide, and reached an elevation of 11,680 feet at Rollins Pass, near Corona. There was also a long series of switchback loops as we climbed the grades. At that time it was the highest railroad line ever completed in the United States.

Midday we reached a railroad yard and I have film of the Third Section catching up to us. In the background, you can see the huge steam engines taking on water as the trains prepared to move west to Salt Lake. I remember that my "dukke box"

lunch with a ham and cheese sandwich, large navel orange, can of sardines and a large package of cup cakes tasted great. I spent most of the day lying in my bunk and trying to organize my "dukke box" at the foot of the bed. It was here that I stored letters, my camera, underwear, socks and other personal items. I rented this storage box.

The three circus trains rolled across the divide and the western mountains, and we finally arrived in the Salt Lake railroad yard in the wee morning hours of August 15. Finally, Mr. McGrath, our train master, could relax and start the job of unloading the entire three sections.

Monday, August 15, Salt Lake City: I woke up early and walked past the Union Pacific station and on to the center of town. Here I stood in amazement looking at the great temple erected by Brigham Young and his Mormon followers. I took movies of the building and the statue of Joseph Smith and then found the drug store where Roxie McLeer had the advance sale. He was a colorful character from New York and part of the usher and ticket selling crowd, a happy Irishman. Roxie had long lines at the advance sale, so I knew that we were to have a good matinee and night show. We played the fairgrounds that day and in the late afternoon I climbed up into a grandstand and took movies of the beautiful countryside. That night the midway was packed with people, the big show was sold out and the side show just kept grinding away, turning one tip after another. Those who missed the performance could at least hear the music of Merle Evans and the show band, the voices of Harold Ronk or Ricky Dawn as they sang show songs, and, of course, the great voice of announcer and Ringmaster Count Nicholas. The Count was the man with the golden whistle. I always thought that the Count in his red jacket, white riding jodhpurs, and black riding boots all topped by a black top hat added dignity to the show. After a busy day, I quickly fell asleep as the train left town. BW

After graduation from Hiram College in Hiram, Ohio, Bill Taggart worked for the Ringling-Barnum Circus from 1953 to 1956. He has previously published accounts of his experience on the show in Bandwagon.

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The Loyal-Repenskys, Equestrian Greats

by John Daniel Draper



In 1932 a prominent European circus family of principal riders, the Loyal-Repensky troupe, came to America. The April 5, 1932 *New York American* carried a shipboard photo of the parents and the seven children arriving in New York. Ringling billed them as a "troupe of bareback riding marvels whose equals do not exist." John Ringling had seen them perform with the Circus Jonghe in Belgium and wired Pat Valdo about engaging them to come to America to open in the center ring at Madison Square Garden. The overseas telegraphic message still exists. Dated January 25, 1932 it reads: "Wire me if you think we should engage Loyal Repenski (sic). John Ringling."

"As far back as the time of Napoleon" it was alleged that "a Loyal performed daredevil antics on horseback which attracted the attention of the French emperor." According to circus legend, "Napoleon was so impressed with the riding of the first rider that when his cavalry regiment was mustered out he presented the ex-soldier with a royal grant of such amount to finance a traveling circus in France. The result was the Circus Medrano. Loyal's son married Mlle. Marie Repensky, a Polish circus star. Their descendants, wishing to preserve the glory of both names, linked them with a hyphen."

The troupe joined the Sells-Floto Circus in 1932 under the management of the Ringling organization. It consisted of nine family members and some attendants for the horses. According to Fred Bradna, writing in 1952, the family produced the biggest equestrian thrill. "The troupe in a lone spot on the show did fast riding and good riding." There were five sisters and two brothers mounted on five horses to form a galloping pyramid consisting of four Roman stands and three top mounters. The sisters were Esterina (Claudia), Albertina, Germana, Zefta and Simone working with their brothers, Alfonso and Guistino. Guistino was the star, although all were excellent riders. The troupe also worked with teams of two, three and four mounts, giving much greater dimensions to the jockey act than any other troupe had achieved. Later a sixth girl, Maria, was added to the act. She was



The November 26, 1935 *Sarasota Daily Tribune* ran this photo of the Loyal-Repensky family. From left are Adolphe Del Bosq (Maria's husband), Guistino, Alphonso, Albertina, Erica, Germana, Maria, Esterina, Zefta and father Jules Loyal. John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art Collection.

the daughter of mother Stella Loyal's sister. She joined after the death of her parents. Father Jules Loyal controlled the whip as Guistino somersaulted like a pinwheel on his pounding steed from the back of one horse to another in the rear with seeming nonchalance. The girls also did strong balancing acts and all seven performers were on one horse for the close. In a reflective moment Guistino maintained that any active, supple child with normal reflexes could be taught to excel as a bareback rider. He was qualified to say so for he



The Loyal-Repensky riders on Ringling-Barnum Circus in 1937. Burt Wilson Albums, Pfening Archives.



Zefta Loyal, shown here in mid leap about 1937, is one of only three women to consistently do a horse to horse somersault. Pfening Archives.

was the sixth generation of a famous bareback riding family.

The September 5, 1932 *Atlanta Constitution* ran the following announcement: "Famous European Performers To Marry Just Before Main Show. Today will be long significant for Miss Ereka Sarin of Riga, Latvia and Juistino (sic) Repensky-Loyal of Turin, Italy—both are featured performers with John Robinson's 10 Big Shows, combined with Sells-Floto Circus—for it's their wedding day. [The Robinson name was added to the Sells-Floto title in the South.]

"The ceremony which will be performed in the 'big top' at 2 o'clock immediately preceding the big show program will unite two of the most famous European Circus families. Miss Sarin is a member of the Schwartz family, for many generations featured in circuses in France, Germany and Russia, while Mr. Loyal's relatives have been identified with circuses in all European nations. The couple met for the first time this spring when the Schwartz and Repensky-Loyal acts were supported by the John Robinson and Sells-Floto Circus.

"Miss Esma Wilson, an Atlanta girl who is one of the principal aerialists with the circus, will be maid of honor. Jack Croake, superintendent of the ticket department will be best man. Little Mary Lou Nelson, 5 year old member of the Nelson acrobatic troupe, will be the ring bearer. Bridesmaids will include Misses Estrella Nelson, Viola Barnett, Vivian Nelson, Jesse Goodenough. Carmencita Nelson and Rosina Nelson. The grooms will include Fred Ledgett, equestrian director, Grover McCabe, Rink Wright, Paul Nelson, Chester Barnett and Clifford McDougall."

At the end of the season the Loyal-Repensky troupe went to Paris to perform. It appeared on Al G. Barnes in 1933 until near the end of the season when it was brought over to Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey to replace the Orrin Davenport Riders when they closed to go to fair dates. The act remained on Ringling Bros. from 1934 to 1938 and on Cole Bros. for 1939 and 1940. It grew to include six girls, three men and a clown. On rare occasions the name "Eris Family" (or Iris Family) was used. This name had originated in 1911 for a Tally-Ho wagon act. In February of 1933 there were ten people and eight horses in the act when it appeared at the Toledo, Ohio Shrine Circus. The Repensky Troupe was in

Sarasota for the 1934 American Legion Show. Also Bill Emery, in charge of elephants on Ringling Bros., had Ann Pickles, Eleanor Raymond and Ereka Repensky working for him.

The year 1935 was quite eventful for the family. In January the Loyal-Repensky trick riders and the Loyal sisters riding in *pas de deux* appeared with Bertram Mills Circus in London. They did a command performance for Queen Elizabeth. Zefta Loyal was the only woman other than May Wirth and Rosa Rosalind to have ever done a horse to horse somersault.

Two other sisters did a remarkable feat at Madison Square Garden. Germana, while riding standing on a panneau or plank on the back of a trotting horse in the ring, supported Esterina in a head to head balance. Another sensational trick presented by the five sisters was a simultaneous jump-up to the horse running in the ring.

On April 30, 1935 Albertina Loyal and Aldemaro Catorze, an acrobat of the Danwill Troupe, were married at Newark, New Jersey. That fall the Loyal-Repensky family, five beautiful girls and two agile men, appeared on Ringling-Barnum in their large riding act in which poise, balance, beauty and artistry prevailed. The Repensky, Rieffenach and Walters families were all re-engaged by Ringling 1936. Interesting features in the 1936 Repensky contract follow: "It is expressly agreed and understood that if Show engages the Artist for the season of 1937, the Artist shall not perform in New York City between closing of Show of the season of 1936 and beginning of season of 1937 without written consent of the Show. Signed by S. W. Gumpertz and Jules Loyal, Permanent address - 1560 Broadway, N. Y. City

"Artist's Independent Contractor Agreement



Loyal-Repenskys on Ringling-Barnum in 1938. Bottom row from left are Albertina, Germana, Simone and Alphonso. Second tier from left are Zefta, Guistino and Violetta. Top mounter is Esterina. John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art Collection.

"Agreement made at Sarasota, Fla. this 17th day of Sept. 1935 between RBB&B, Inc., hereinafter called the Show and Loyal-Repensky Troupe, hereinafter called Artist.

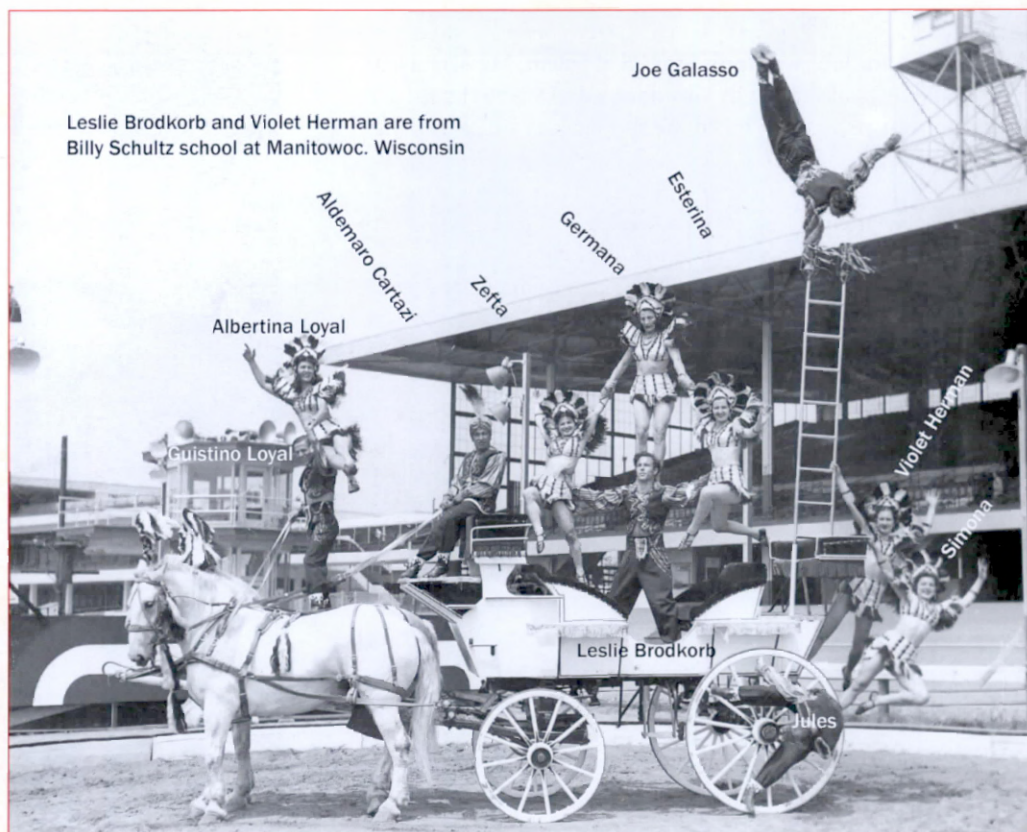
"For lump sum of \$400.00 per week, payable weekly for season of 1936, commencing on or about. . . Artist sells to Show his act and in addition to said sums accept without charge from Show (while under canvas) meals, car-lodging and transportation, common and customary in circus business. Artist represents that his act in matter of props, apparatus, property and personnel is as hereinafter set forth; and shall be maintained as is, and as represented, throughout season, to wit: Loyal-Repensky Troupe: 2 girls, acrobatic work on Panneau Horse. Four girls, tight wire or foot juggling act. Six girls, three men and ringmaster riding in Jockey. One boy doing somersault from horse to horse if required. It is understood and agreed that Loyal-Repensky Troupe consists of 12 people, of which only 9 actually work in above acts, there being mother and one child not working, also one horse attendant. The show agrees to furnish board and transportation for twelve people during life of this contract, except when Show is exhibiting in a building. It is understood and agreed that sleeping accommodations of the Loyal-Repensky's in cars of the Show shall be all together, including 3 staterooms. A charge of five dollars weekly will be made for each dog or animal pet carried on the Show. No compulsory tipping is permitted in this organization and if any employee, on account of not receiving tips, in any way neglects his duty, it is up to you to report such case to the management.

"The option is given the Show to renew this contract for next succeeding season upon same terms and contract price, by giving notice to Artist 80 days prior to closing date and Show by agreement reserves right to transfer and place artist during term or part term of this contract with any other of its shows or circuses under its ownership or management, all terms and conditions of this contract continuing, prevailing and obtaining. Twelve performances on secular days, together with Sunday performances when given shall constitute one week's work. The artist shall receive no payment for rehearsals during or previous to this engagement nor for any performances, omitted, from whatever cause, during the season. The Show shall hold back one week's payment of the Artist as a guaranteed of good faith."

At the 1937 Zenobia Shrine Circus at Toledo, the Loyal Sisters (Eustines) did bareback riding and Guistino (Adolpheus) did a bareback somersault from one horse to another. During the years 1937 until the early 1950s, the Loyals also performed their three high acrobatic teeterboard act to the shoulders of their partners. Here they were billed as the Seven Brannocks. Esterina did 2½ somersaults. Leslie Brodkorb was the understudy. He was from the Billy Schultz School of Manitowoc, Wisconsin.

On December 13, 1939 Guistino Loyal married Ermide Cristiani.

At Barnes-Carruthers Greater Olympia Circus in the Chicago Stadium, April 19 to May 5, 1940, Guistino brought to America a jump-to horse, carrying a regulation size racing sulky, a stunt he performed in 1935 at the Scala in Berlin. He also brought three teeterboard acts with a closing spectacle on the track of six boards in action and 20 people flying through space at one time. On Cole Bros. in 1940 Guistino introduced a novel trick when he did a backward somersault from horse to horse through a hoop with his sister Zefta passing under him from horse to horse.



The Loyal-Repensky Talley Ho act about 1942. The Billy Schultz noted on image was the father of former Circus World Museum director Bill Schultz. Loyal Family Collection.

Their Tally-Ho wagon act originated in Europe. The wagon was stored for many years in Lille, France until 1941 when it was brought to the United States. The act was well liked by Mike Barnes of Barnes-Carruthers. It was used only on vaudeville and fair dates, never on circuses under canvas. Papa Jules was the only one who ever rode the rear left wheel in the act. The wagon was lost when it was confiscated in Cuba.

The artists who made up the Iris Family, which originated the Tally-Ho act in 1911 in connection with their riding act, were Jules and Stella Loyal, Pierre Pieantoni and Romola and Genieva Travalgia. Jules and Stella Loyal, whose maiden name was Stella Travalgia, were the parents of the Loyal Sisters as well as Guistino and Alfonso. Romolo was a brother and Genieva was a sister of Stella. Circo Travalgia was one of Italy's largest circuses.

As it first appeared in America the act was billed as the Eris Family, a riding troupe of famous gauchos from the Argentine. It consisted of some dozen men and women in acrobatic poses on the vehicle pulled by two or four ring horses. The vehicle was featured as a typical South American family open coach. The performers vaulted from it and somersaulted and jumped onto each other's shoulders and to the backs of the horses or to the ground. In

reality this group was the Loyal-Repensky bareback riding troupe consisting of Guistino and his five sisters. Also included were Albertina's husband Aldemaro Catarzi, and Esterina's husband Joe Galasso, as well as Leslie Brodkorb and Violet Herman. On occasion Jules Loyal rode on the left rear wheel.

The Eris troupe performed in both 1941 and 1942 at the Olympia Circus at Chicago Stadium. Guistino rode the lead team and Zefta was featured in the display. Erica Loyal (Zarina) worked elephants and horse on Ringling-Barnum in 1941 and 1942. Germana was on Dick Ryan's Rodeo, Thrill Show & Circus in Detroit in 1941. That same year, the Loyal-Repenskys, four women and four men, joined Wallace Bros. for four weeks on June 25 at Salem, Massachusetts. Several members of the family also doubled in a teeterboard act. They signed in response to an ad the show ran in which it wanted a "feature act for the big show."

It was at this time that Guistino published a note that if anyone wished to copy their act, he sincerely asked that it be copied with complete exactness to do justice to the original.

At the Cleveland Al Sirat Grotto, Guistino, doing a bareback riding stunt, fell off one of the horses, but only suffered a bad bump and some scratches. Two horses broke away from one of the saddle acts but were later captured and the act continued.

The Loyal-Repensky Troupe appeared in the Osman Shrine Circus in St. Paul, Minnesota. Dainty Zefta Loyal was the bareback riding star on the same show the next year along with the Loyal troupe. Wallace Bros. for 1942 listed Violetta Loyal along with Zefta Loyal and Dorothy Lewis in three principal acts and later in

the program the Loyal-Repenskys appeared. Zefta was listed in the Osman Shrine Circus program for 1942 and in the Hamid-Morton program for 1946 as well as in the Ringling-Barnum route books for 1943-1945, 1952 and 1955. The American Legion Thrill Circus in Savannah listed the Loyal troupe's teeterboard act for 1943 and in the same year Ringling presented the premier equestriennes, the



Zefta Loyal while on Ringling-Barnum in 1943. Burt Wilson Albums, Pfening Archives.

Loyal Sisters featuring Zefta.

Guistino left the family in 1945 and formed his own riding troupe on Cole Bros. That year it consisted of Freddie and Ethel Freeman, Guistino and wife Ermide, Jinx Adams, Gee Gee Engesser and Pat Scott, who served as ring mistress. The act was a show stopper although members of the troupe from hither and yon had not yet completely memorized their routines. Guistino had his old agility. The pyramids on two and four horses were effective, but he did not do the horse to horse somersault because he had not yet been able

to find a suitable trailing galloper. He was still looking for one. The next year on Ringling-Barnum his troupe was made up of Ermide, Jinx Lochak, Molly Locke, Marian Seifert, Ernestine Clarke, Pat Walsh, Lucretia Darnay and Geraldine Hill. In the following years he had riding acts on Polack Bros. in 1947 and 1950; Ringling-



The Loyal-Repenskys at the Chicago Shrine Circus produced by Orrin Davenport in January, 1938. Burt Wilson Albums, Pfening Archives.

Barnum in 1948, 1949, 1952, 1955-1957, and 1959; his own Gran Circo Americano in Puerto Rico in 1951; Hunt Bros. in 1954; Atayde Bros. in 1950-1951 and 1955; and the Clyde Beatty Circus in 1956. He was the equestrian director of Cristiani Bros. in 1960. In 1949 his troupe contained, in addition to himself, Aldo Cristiani, Lucretia Darnay, Andli Bogino, Katherine Kramer, Rusty Parent, Fay Romig and Elizabeth Wright.

During these years the act at times carried ten people and eight

The Loyal-Repensky riders on Ringling-Barnum in Madison Square Garden in 1944. Burt Wilson Albums, Pfening Archives.



horses. It was the largest group of bareback riders ever assembled for one ring at the same time. Guistino leaped from the back of his white ring horse, carrying no reins, as it passed under a bridge formed by three girls in the troupe. On another occasion Guistino did a double somersault from one horse to another while working his body through a small hoop.

In 1945 the remaining members of the family formed their own circus and eventually performed in Central America, Puerto Rico, Cuba and Sarasota. They disbanded the circus when Castro came to power.

In September 1950, while on Polack Bros. Western Unit, Guistino purchased Circo Americano in Puerto Rico from Jerome Wilson. He changed the title to Gran Circo Loyal Americano for a 1951 tour of the island. The Loyal family acts joined the show after the end of the Polack season. The show used a new 125 pole round top tent designed by Loyal. It had two main poles and a 45 foot middle with little obstruction of vision for the patrons. The canvas was green with orange trim and silver stars around the quarter poles and was both flameproof and waterproof.

The opening was set for March 10, 1951 in San Juan. After five weeks there it toured the rest of the island. After the close of the


Polack season at Charleston, West Virginia on December 10, the family went to Mexico City to open the end of December for eight weeks with their bareback and teeterboard act on Circo Atayde. Animals and equipment were then shipped via New Orleans to Puerto Rico and the personnel flew over to San Juan. Meanwhile Jules Loyal and Aldemaro Catarzi went directly to San Juan at the end of the Polack season to ready the show there.

The staff came mostly from members of the family although the South American bandmaster used by Wilson was retained. The Loyals, besides their big riding act and teeterboard act, contributed four other numbers. Malaikova's high wire act, Capt. Enrique Demell's lions and a seal act were included. Three Spanish clowns from South America were used.

The show was presented in one ring surrounded by 42 boxes of four seats each. Back of these were ten rows of chairs and ten blues. The seating capacity was 4,000. The big top was patterned after a tent used in Germany forty years before.

In the spring of 1954 the Loyal-Repensky Circus opened its first tour of the United States. Guistino Loyal, the owner-manager, brought the show back after a tour of Central America which was capped by a nine plane airlift that returned the show from Panama. The show closed in July and the act joined the Hunt Bros. Circus.

Guistino Loyal was featured on Ringling-Barnum in 1955 and 1956. Jules and Simone Loyal as well as Zefta Loyal Perez were also in the act in 1956. Guistino was on the show when it closed under



EMPRESA GRAN CIRCO LOYAL REPENSKY

TOURNEE
PANAMERICANA

Sarasota, Fla.
Nov. 10, 1952

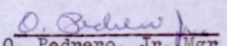
Tom Parkinson
BILLBOARD
188 W. Randolph St.
Chicago, 1, Ill.

Dear Tom;

Thank you for the write-up in this week's Billboard. I just got back and can now give you a little more information on the Show.

We open in Habana, Cuba some time in December and then will go out on a four month's tour of the Island. The Show will travel on 10 Rail road cars and 3 trucks. We will use one two seater air plane with the name of the Show on the wings that will stay with us all during the tour, especially to fly over the location where the Show is before opening. Special paper is now being printed in Cuba featuring The Loyal Repensky Family. I can't give you any information of acts, etc., as I am still working on the program and contracting. As soon as I have a complete line-up, I'll send it to you. I shipped the equipment from San Juan, Puerto Rico on a Spanish Liner last week and I ~~stayed~~ stayed in Habana till it arrived and it is all in good shape but there is a crew there now painting and getting it all in excellent shape. The rest of the equipment and animals, etc., will leave from here within the next month.

Thank you very much.

Yours truly,

O. Pedrero, Jr., Mgr
Circo Loyal Repensky

Letter from Octavio Pedrero, Jr., manager of the Gran Circo Loyal Repensky, to Tom Parkinson, Billboard circus editor, in which he reports on the show's upcoming engagement in Havana. Pfening Archives.



Guistino Loyal doing a somersault on Ringling-Barnum in Madison Square Garden in 1944. Burt Wilson Albums, Pfening Archives.

canvas at Pittsburgh on July 16. He had this comment. "I saw the show fold in 1938 on labor troubles; I saw it fold in Hartford in 1944 because of the fire. But at those times I knew why it had closed. Now I'm not sure. But we have no choice; we must stay around to see what the future holds." Ringling time sheets for 1956 reveal some of the salaries. Albertina received \$100 per week, Ermide got \$75 and Guistino got \$325.

The Guistino Loyal riding troupe joined the Clyde Beatty Circus at Memphis on October 15, 1956. The act included seven people and six horses, a three-up pyramid, jockey riding by two members and a six fork-up jump to one horse. Zefta turned a backward somersault from one horse to another. Guistino clowned with a

speedy wind up that set it off.

Jules Loyal, born August 26, 1881, died at his home in Sarasota, on October 29, 1956. He was a fifth generation circus performer who had had his own troupe in Europe before joining Ringling-Barnum. He was a native of France before coming to the United States in 1932. Surviving him were his widow Stella, five daughters, two sons and 14 grandchildren. Requiem mass was held in St. Martha's Catholic Church in Sarasota and burial was in Manasota Burial Park.

Papa Loyal acquired his first circus in France when he was quite young and toured all over Europe, playing before many celebrities and acquiring medals from notables that he treasured highly. He gave up being a circus owner in 1931, but in 1950 he tried ownership again and opened in Puerto Rico with his Circo Loyal Americano Circus which he toured in Cuba and Central America. It finally folded in the United States as the Loyal-Repensky Circus in 1954. He was one of the first to present a one ring European style circus to the American public.

Jules Loyal originated many of the equestrian acrobatic acts which were performed for the first time by his children. The three tiered human pyramid on five horses racing abreast in the ring was first performed by the troupe in Europe. With four horses running in file around the ring, Guistino somersaulted from the lead horse backward to the fourth. Zefta simultaneously somersaulted through two hoops, a smaller one held by her and a larger one held by her father. Germana and Esterina, billed as The Sisters Loyal, performed a head to head balancing act with Esterina head standing on Germana's head as the horse trotted around the ring. While Jules originated the acts, the girls designed and made the costumes.

Guistino Loyal's riding act appeared on King Bros. in 1960 when, in addition to Guistino, it contained Cosetta Cristiani, Pepe and Oreste Canestrelli and Italo Fornasari.

Stella Guiseppina Loyal died at 89 on November 19, 1975. Born in France, she married Jules in 1904 while with her family's circus in Italy.

Guistino was inducted into the Circus Hall of Fame in the spring of 1978 in Sarasota, Florida.

In 1980 Stebbing's Royal European Circus had the Loyal-Repensky Riding



Jules and Stella Loyal about 1904 while performing with the Circus Travalgia in Italy. John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art Collection.



Timi Loyal, right, with Mark Karoly at the Royal Hanneford Circus in White Plains, New York, in the 1990s. Paul Gutheil Photograph.

Act. Here is John Hurdle's description of the event: "Bill Stebbing, the owner and equestrian director announced: 'Ladies and gentlemen, we are proud to present the seventh generation of one of the most distinguished bareback riding families in circus history, the Loyal-Repenskys, with Timi Loyal and Company!' The red velvet curtains of the Performer's Entrance parted, revealing 21 year old Timi, his wife Kim, and Timi's father, the great Guistino Loyal, patriarch of the family with two magnificent black rosin-backs.

"Timi has been trained by his father for about five years, is a fine performer and well on his way to becoming an outstanding rider in the great tradition of his family. During the act Papa stands center ring with his whip, pacing the horses, while Timi and Kim perform their acrobatic poses and attitudes riding the two horses abreast. Then Timi does a series of tricks, including hand-to-feet flip-flops, pirouettes, and somersaults on one horse. Toward the end of the act Stebbing announces: 'Timi will now perform one of the most difficult tricks in bare-back riding—a somersault from the back of one horse to the back of the one following!' The young man accomplishes this with all the finesse of a seasoned performer, but occasionally misses on the first try. After such a miss his dad calls him to the center of the ring, bends him over, gives him a swift kick in the rear and Timi mounts the horse again and completes the somersault. This by-play is part of the act when occasion prompts it. But one afternoon, after a miss and the playful kick, Papa made a disgusted gesture, took off his jacket, handed it to Timi and to the surprise of everyone jumped to the back of the horse, indicating he would show how to do the trick properly. With all the artistry and showmanship of years of performing he rode around the ring a couple of times standing erect on the horse's broad back and finally called, 'Are you ready?' Everyone shouted 'YES!' He made motions as if he was preparing to jump, and we all held our breath. Then, with perfect comedy timing he called back. 'Well I'm not,' and stepped down to the sawdust shaking his head and saying, 'forty years too late.' The audience roared with laughter, but most of them were too young to realize they had just seen one of the greatest bare-back riders of all time, at 71, again gracefully doing that which

he was born to do, riding a rosin-back in a circus ring! However the circus performers and this writer were thrilled at the privilege of seeing this unexpected and thrilling sight."

Ermide Cristiani Loyal died on April 4, 1987 at her home in Sarasota. Born in Modena, Italy, she came to the United States in 1939. She was a member of the Cristiani troupe and later the Loyal-Repensky riding troupe. Survivors included her husband Guistino; a daughter, Gloria; four sons, Guistino, Jr., Remo, Timi and Daniel; a brother, Remo; and seven grandchildren. Mass was held in St. Martha's Catholic Church and burial was in Palms Memorial Park.

Guistino passed away on January 17, 1999 in Sarasota. He was born on August 2, 1909 in Torino, Italy. His survivors included his daughter Gloria; four sons, Guistino, Jr. of Sarasota, Remo in Georgia, Timi, living and riding bareback in Germany and Daniel of Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

"Circus was all he ever thought about and all he ever did." He had performed before Hitler, Mussolini and the Queen of England. He spoke seven languages. His hobby was playing chess. As an expert he often played with the Big Show's champions. He took the game seriously, never clowning and always won. He was one of the founders of the Sailor Circus and coached is members until 1997. One of his former students said, "He knew so much; could tumble, do comedy, horses and acrobatics. Just five years ago he was still doing round-off back handsprings."

Of Guistino's five children, Timi, born in 1958, was the only one who aspired to be a principal bareback rider. In 1976 he received praise as he rode with the George Hanneford family of riders on the William Kay Shrine Circus at Jacksonville. In 1977 he played Bolivia and Peru with his bareback act. He presented the same act on Hoxie Bros Circus in 1979 and also did a double trapeze act, called the Valentino Duo, with his wife Kim. The stunning artistry of the Timi Loyal-Repensky bareback riders was evident in the work of the twenty-one year old Timi. He had the makings of a circus superstar. He performed with his beautiful young wife and two fine horses. With Timi the Loyal-Repensky riders did outstanding Roman and trick riding. His act showed poise and commanding stage presence. There was a nonstop display of equestrian acrobatics and classy horsemanship, classic training and good preparation.

In 1980 on Moslem Shrine Circus in Detroit, Mark Karoly was in center ring with two horses and Timi Loyal was there also with two horses, both performing simultaneous somersaults. Later in the year on Stebbing's European Circus the audience watched Timi and Kim Loyal performing under the eye of the great Guistino. Mama worked the concessions.

By 1981 Timi had added a pseudo drunk routine to his tricks. At the Chicago Shrine Circus he presented this feature and Guistino got into the act by balancing on the back of a horse.

In 1982 Timi was at the Al Menah Shrine in Nashville, Tennessee riding bareback. That year the Hanneford Riding Act in the Royal Hanneford Circus included Dennis Zoppe, Kim Loyal, Nellie Hanneford and Mark Karoly. At the Antioch Shrine date in Dayton, Ohio Kim Loyal was a member of the Karoly-Zoppe riders as well as working in the trapeze act with the flying Gaonas. Mark Karoly was in the elephant act.

Timi Loyal and his new wife Denise were featured on Hoxie Bros. Great American Show in 1983. In addition to their performance with the Loyal-Repensky Riding Act, they did a cradle and graceful double trapeze routine. Timi, riding on a pad, was featured in the Rosa and Enrique Suarez riding act. Denise and seven year old Maggie Suarez were also in the act. Timi did a back somersault from one horse to another and a backward somersault on the same horse. Timi and Denise did a cradle act closing with a helicopter spin. Kim Loyal and Mark Karoly were in one of three rings of bareback riders on the Hanneford Circus at the 1983 Detroit Shrine Circus.

The following season Hoxie Bros. featured the Loyal-Suarez bareback riders. Timi fronted the act, which had six horses and five people. Guistino joined the act, handling the whip. Timi and Denise also did their unique cradle act and Denise performed on the ladders.

The Suarez-Loyal-Repensky Riding Act was on the 1984 Sarasota Showfolks Circus. This act repeated on the Great American Circus in 1985. Besides Timi and Denise, Enrique and Rosa Suarez with little Maggie were in the bareback act. The Dynamic Duo, the Loyal cradle act, was also featured.

For 1986 Timi introduced a riding gorilla parody on horseback.

He and Denise also did their aerial cradle act.

The following year their acts were on Bentley Bros. Circus. Mongo Jumbo, the almost human gorilla, rode standing upright on the back of a moving horse. Timi was assisted by Denise and Capt. Suarez. Denise and Maggie Suarez danced on a horse. At Cincinnati only, 78 year old Guistino paced the horses and at the last show rode the horse around the ring standing up to the ovation of the audience and circus personnel.

In 1988 Timi Loyal and the Suarez Troupe jumped from Carson City, Nevada to Hagerstown, Maryland to

join the Tommy Hanneford show. They returned to Bentley Bros. when that show started its summer tour at Plattsburg, New York. His act now included Timi, Denise and Enrique, Rosa, Maggie and Ricky Suarez. It used three horses, two men, two women and



Timi Loyal executes a backward somersault from horse to horse on Vidbel's Olde Tyme Circus in the 1990s. Paul Gutheil Photograph.

a nine year old who showed that horsemanship was still alive. The act culminated with the nine year old Ricky Suarez standing on the shoulders of his bareback riding father.

In 1989 the acts were again on Bentley Bros. with four people and four horses. Timi had the gorilla act, rode and with Denise did trapeze. Enrique Suarez was also a rider in the act. In the fall of 1989 the Loyal-Suarez riders were on the Big Apple Circus. In addition to Timi and Denise, Enrique Suarez, Magdalena Suarez and Enrique, Jr. were in the act. After the 1990 Big Apple summer season ended, they went to Circus Flora where the riding act consisted of Sacha Pavlata and Giovanni Zoppé as well as the Loyals and Suarezes. Timi Loyal turned three successive somersaults in this act. For Labor Day the troupe was combined with the Albert Zoppé riders to form a group of eleven riders.

In 1991 Timi Loyal performed at the Arabian Nights Dinner Theater near Orlando. Later he went to live and perform in Germany. He was there when his father died in January of 1999. In 2005 he returned to the United States to appear in a special taping of the work of prominent bareback riders. They came to the Arabian Nights Theater to be photographed doing their particular riding acts.

Timi and Elizabeth Loyal with their daughters Aurora and Suri had their Loyal Vaulting Equestrian Show at fairs during 2012, playing the Boone County Fair in Missouri in July.

In 1952 on Hagen-Wallace Alfonso Loyal did a juggling act. He was on the Kelly Morris Circus in 1955 where he did head balancing on a swinging trapeze as the Great Alfonso and had the Alfonso Repensky riding act. In 1956 he rode a principal act on Al G. Kelly-Miller Bros. The next year he did juggling and head balancing on Benson Bros. Circus and in 1958 he was riding on Gil Gray Circus.

Luciana Loyal had been born to Alfonso and Lillie Loyal in 1949 and became a performer at the age of six. On Al G. Kelly-Miller Bros. the Great Alfonso was a juggler and he, Lillie, and Lucy's brother Luciano Joseph, performed in the bareback riding act, consisting of three girls and two men. In 1961 Alfonso also performed on the head balancing trapeze with Alex Padilla.

In 1963 on Carson and Barnes he was a juggler and a rider with the Loyal-Repensky's. The next year on Al G. Kelly-Miller Bros. he was a rider with the Alfonso Loyal Family. In 1967 he performed on the trapeze. That year TV star Sky King was hired. He traveled with the show for two years and Lucy sang *I Love a Circus*, a special piece of music used when Sky King was introduced.

On January 2, 1974 tragedy struck when Joseph Loyal, Lucy's brother, was killed in a traffic accident near Alice, Texas. A bareback rider on Fisher Bros. Circus, he was driving a show truck loaded with rigging.

The 1970s was a busy time for Lucy on Carson and Barnes. She trained horses in addition to performing on the web and trapeze and riding in the bareback act. She also directed a liberty horse act. Because she had dropped out of school during junior high, she was now aware of the importance of an education. She vowed that her children would get an education. There was a son, Armando, and eventually three daughters, Jose, Mona and Tina. All of them performed in the bareback act at various times. Although the children were on the road during the summer, Lucy always insisted that they return home for school when it opened in the fall.

Meanwhile Lucy added other acts to her repertoire such as aerial cradle, an elephant routine and high school riding. She also whistled signals to the aerial starlets on the web. In the winter months Lucy

performed at the Detroit Shrine Circus. By 1981 she was listed as part of the horse department when Alfonso was manager of the ring stock on Carson and Barnes Circus.

Lucy was always fun loving. In the 1990s as the ringmaster would announce that anyone wanting to become a bareback rider should step forward, Lucy, as a plant in the audience, would step into the ring, buckle on the riding mechanic and go through a comical routine under Armando's direction.

She was always thinking of new activities. She sold reserve seat tickets and designed and made new wardrobe in the off-season. As late as the 2010 season she designed a number of new costumes for the Kelly Miller Circus where Armando performed his horseback act and presented the elephants.

At a time when traveling on a mud show was never easy, Lucy was always in a grand spirit. She put the good of the show ahead of everything else and she helped young people on the circus who wanted to learn circus skills. She was quite supportive of the idea of forming a community circus for Hugo, Oklahoma's youth.



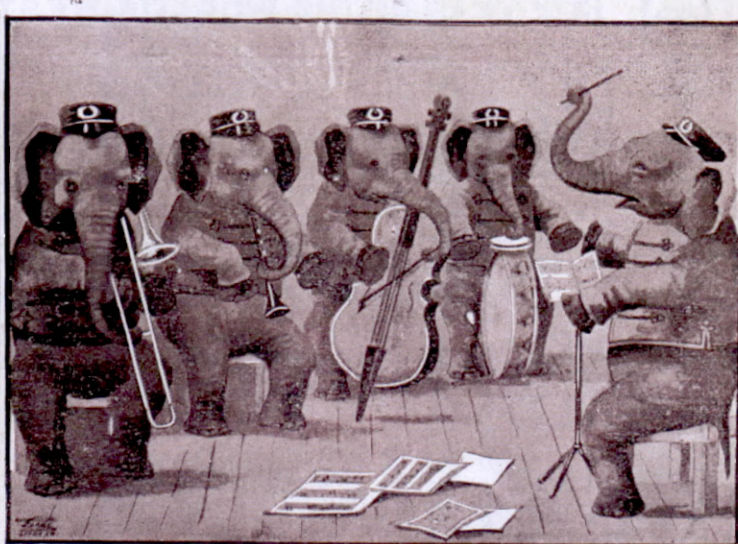
Alfonso Loyal on the Kelly-Miller Circus at Council Grove, Kansas, May 13, 1956. Circus World Museum Collection.

Over the years Lucy and her family were quite loyal to Carson and Barnes. Only in the summer of 1985 did she go over to Circus Vargas to be part of the riding act and work in concessions. Returning to Carson and Barnes in 1986 she formed a new troupe of riders consisting of Chava Rosales, Alfredo Morales and Moira Loter on three fast moving Belgians. In the Rosales Duo, she and Chava did a cradle act.

Lucy was always proud of the fact that she rode bareback, refusing to employ the now more commonly used pad in her riding. She said that although the general public did not know the difference, she did.

Her father Alfonso died on February 20, 1999, almost exactly a month after his brother Guistino. Lucy passed away on June 23, 2012. Except for Timi and Armando, they were the last of the original Loyal-Repensky family of riders. BW

A retired college chemistry professor, Dr. Dan Draper has a deep interest in circus riding acts. He spent over thirty summers at the Circus World Museum in Baraboo, Wisconsin doing research on this topic.



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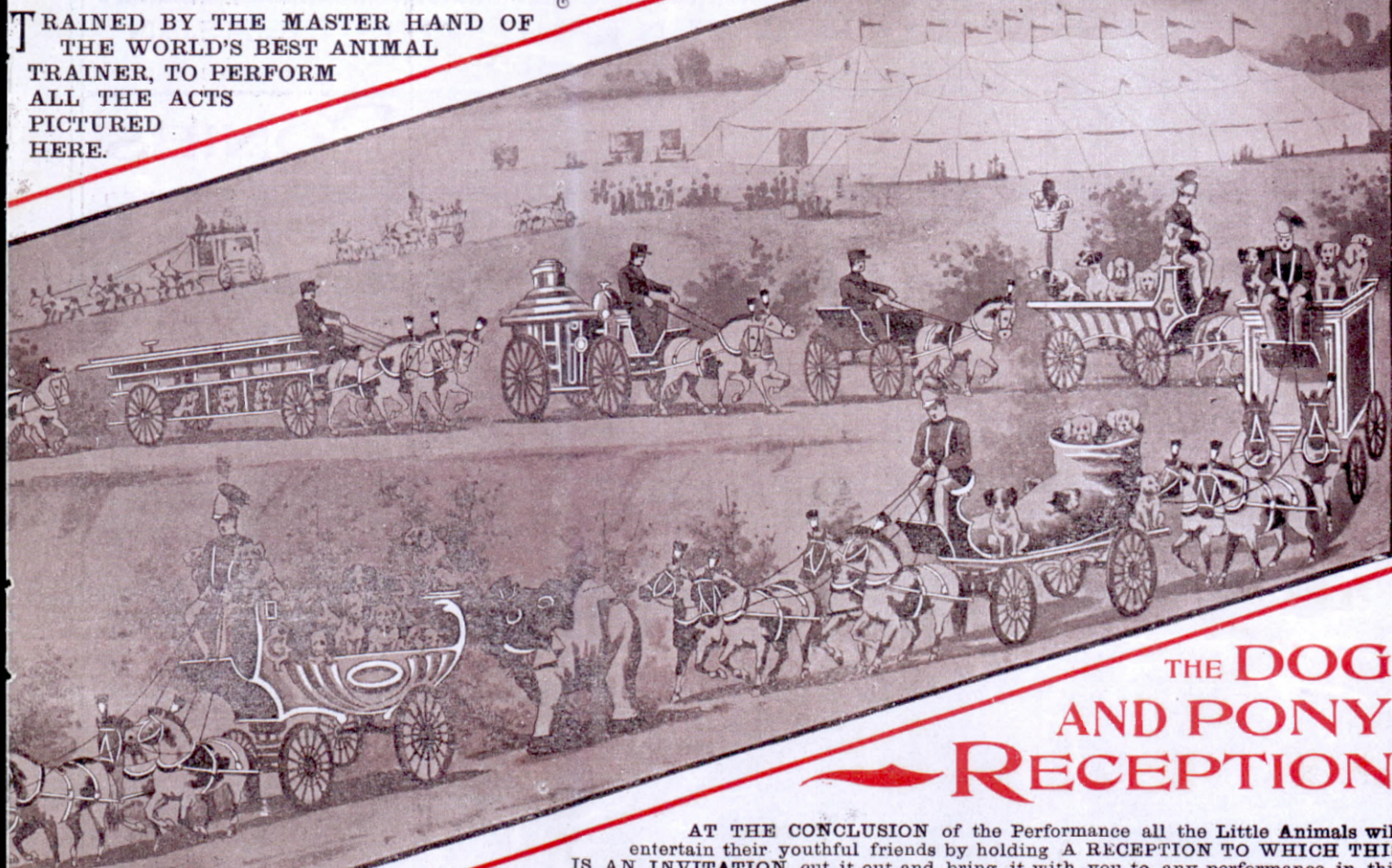
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IS AN INVITATION, cut it out and bring it with you to any performance in this
city, and a careful attendant will see that you are introduced to all the Dogs, and that you

ENJOY A RIDE ON THE PONIES.



On Kenny Dodd's Clown Alley

Women, Tramps Need Not Apply

by Lane Talburt

Female clowns on Cristiani Bros. Circus?
Forget about it!

The show's clown alley did feature a few characters in outlandish, exaggerated feminine attire. But to have a real woman among the clan was simply not to be tolerated.

So why was that web aerialist in her abbreviated frilly costume seen coming in and out of the all-male dressing tent during the performance . . . but not emerging later in her street clothes?

Kenny Dodd has a ready answer: "It was me."

With the Cristiani family struggling to keep its outfit on the road following a series of setbacks in the closing months of the 1959 coast-to-coast tour, Dodd was pressed into joining the dwindling ballet corps.

For the remainder of the route, the 21-year-old made three appearances in drag during each show: in the air with a half dozen showgirls, in the spec riding with legs crossed on the head of an elephant, and as an assistant in Gerard Soules's slack-wire act.

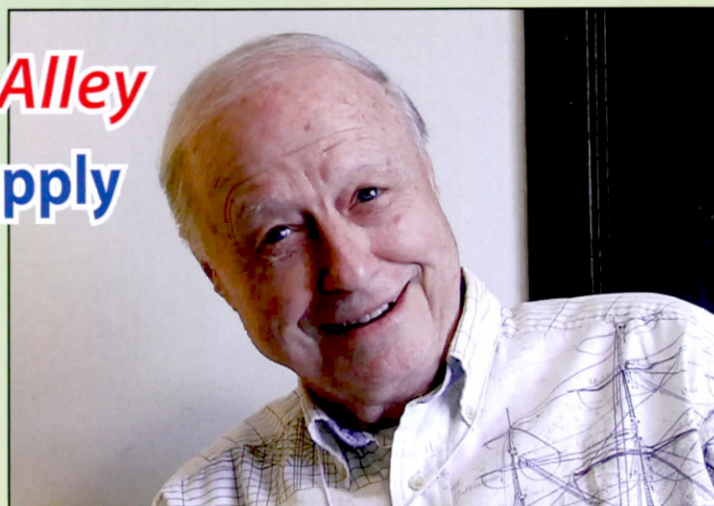
Yes, Dodd's costumes were replete with falsies. He also regularly shaved his underarms and applied a popular brand of leg hair remover.

Under the circumstances, it should be obvious that Dodd harbored no prejudice against women performing in the circus. He and his fellow joeys just didn't want to initiate them into their fraternal disorder.

According to the widely accepted dogma of the times—and this predated Dodd being a First-of-May on Cristiani Bros. Circus in 1956—there simply wasn't any way to fit dames into the clowning routines.

The reason was clear. The Cristiani dressing tent, compact to begin with, was jammed with costume trunks, props, and makeup kits serving ten male joeys. The five Cristiani brothers also used it to change in and out of their riding outfits, their bodies reeking of horse liniment. Occasionally Daviso squeezed his horse into the single-pole tent. It's easy to see it was a pretty smelly place—before, during, and after daily performances, somewhat unwelcoming to a dainty lady. The show's clown sleeper likewise was off-limits to the opposite sex.

The same was true on Clyde Beatty-Cole Bros., where Dodd clowning until his retirement in 1977. (John Pugh, owner of Cole Bros. Circus of the Stars, dressed for his trampoline routine in the clown tent when he landed on the Beatty-Cole show in 1962, Dodd remembered.) As boss clown there for a dozen years, Dodd used similar rationale to give females the brush-off.



Kenny Dodd in June 2012. Lane Talburt Photo.

Not Their Way of Life

During a 1972 interview, he explained why Beatty-Cole listed neither female nor black clowns on its roster: "There's no reason they're not in it except that it's not their way of life," he told a reporter for the *Danville (Virginia) Register* during a one-day stand in his hometown.

(Three years earlier Ringling Bros. had offered contracts to two females, Peggy King and Maude "Flip" Flippen; and an African-American male, Reggie Montgomery, who had recently graduated from Ringling's Clown College. Even so, the female newcomers were assigned not to the clown cars on the Red and Blue Unit trains respectively but to sleepers housing showgirls.)

Dodd said a few female applicants tried to get around the lack of sleeping accommodations on Beatty-Cole by offering to provide their own transportation. He routinely countered by citing previous problems with performers who had asked to be reimbursed for oil and gas expenses and with mechanics, who didn't want the extra worry of dealing with their vehicle breakdowns.

All that changed in his last year when Dodd hired Kathleen Harris as the first female Beatty-Cole clown. Kathleen had an advantage over earlier applicants: she was already living and traveling with her family on the show. Her father, Charlie Harris, was in maintenance, and her mother and two brothers also held down jobs there. She could change in and out of her clown garb in the

family trailer. Problem solved. Ms. Harris continued to clown and to handle public relations duties after her mentor's departure.

As for blackface or tramp clowns, Dodd had little use for them. "I had nothing against them, but tramp clowns wanted to work on their own. They thought they were an Emmett Kelly. They wouldn't take directions."

He also wasn't fond of their disheveled attire—baggy pants, stained shirts and ties, and wrinkled coats.

That explains why tramps were absent from clown alley photos



Dodd and his mother Frances Lacey Dodd about 1946. Kenneth Dodd Collection.

in the 1958 and 1959 Cristiani route books and the 1975 Beatty-Cole program. With few exceptions, the boss clowns on the two shows didn't want them around. To explain, Dodd pointed out, "No blackface clowns ever came to me for a job in the alley." But he did work with blackface jesters on other shows.

Mentored by Billy McCabe, Harry Dann

"The greatest tramp clown I ever saw and worked with was Bo



Dodd while in high school in Danville, Virginia, mid-1950s. Kenneth Dodd Collection.

Bo Barnett, who stopped the show in every performance on Hamid-Morton," Dodd said. "What a performer-clown!"

Although Dodd did not have a prejudice, his preference was whiteface clowns. Perhaps this is because his mentors on Cristiani were Harry Dann and Billy McCabe.

Dodd inherited his signature clown face and costuming, with a few personalized changes, from Dann, a "picture clown" turned ringmaster on Cristiani. A ruffled collar framing the clown's white face is a distinguishing characteristic of that genre, Dodd pointed out.

He readily confessed, "I never thought I was a funny clown." Rather, "I was a very pretty clown."

Before joining out on Cristiani Bros., Dodd hadn't envisioned taking that path when engaging in boyhood dreams of becoming a circus performer.

But that's what captured the attention of other producers—Grace Macintosh, Al Dobritch, Paul V. Kaye, Hamid-Morton, Tom Packs, and Bob Atterbury, all of whom booked Dodd and his partner Billy McCabe for engagements throughout the United States and Canada. In his role as producing clown, Dodd also gained a reputation for devising and introducing contemporary twists into traditional timeworn routines, reflecting changing entertainment values of the circus-going public.

Sans makeup, which he hadn't applied in years, Dodd discussed his two-decade career in a lengthy interview on June 16, 2012 at the Circus Historical Society convention in Baraboo, Wisconsin. He spent many additional hours on the phone with the author reflecting on his Virginia roots and early interest in the circus, and sharing some of the offbeat and significant events of his meanderings. To all his conversations Dodd brought a claptrap memory for dates, places, and names, as well as frequent bursts of laughter.

Aspirations of Being an Aerialist

On any given afternoon in the early fifties, when young Dodd wasn't working out at the YMCA in Danville, Virginia, he more than likely could be found dangling from a jerry-rigged trapeze in the side yard of his home in the adjacent community of Ringgold. Almost everybody in those parts knew the lad aspired to be an aerial circus star.

Dodd also was a regular at the tiny Ringgold post office next door. Every day except Sunday he picked up the mail for his mom, who drummed the ABCs into the heads of elementary kids at a nearby public school.

A creature of habit, Dodd also shelled out a quarter once a week at the drugstore for *Billboard*. "I read it religiously." Perusing the magazine's circus section, he was familiar with routes and personalities of individual traveling outfits. These daily and weekly routines would serve him well in carrying out backyard responsibilities on various circuses.

Though raised in the South, Dodd was a northerner by happenstance. His parents had migrated from their native Virginia to Detroit where his father, Harry Dodd, found employment in the burgeoning auto industry. Kenneth was born there on April 13, 1938. He was raised as an only child, a brother having died at birth. Mr. and Mrs. Dodd divorced several years later, and his mother returned to Danville to resume her teaching career.

Danville was a distinctly southern city, proud of its heritage as the last capital of the Confederacy. That its economy was driven by King Cotton could be attributed to the community's largest employer, Dan River Mills. The racially segregated school Dodd attended, and where his mother taught first and second grade students (but not her own son), was aptly named Dan River School.

As a single parent, Frances Lacey Dodd became a dominant figure in her son's life. In later years, Dodd would assume the role of her caregiver.

Circus Bug Bit Early—and Often

Dodd's uncle, L.N. Gravely, took the youngster to see his first circus—Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey—in Greensboro, North Carolina on November 11, 1948.

Witnessing the grandeur of the Big One from his second row reserved seat under the huge canvas top left an indelible impression on the ten year old. "As a kid I couldn't see anything past that," Dodd admitted. "It was so unbelievable."

Dodd and his uncle ventured to other area cities to see Ringling performances in 1949 and 1950.

In his early teens Dodd got an inkling that circus could not only be entertaining, but also provide an extra source of income. He built a scale model show, appropriately named Dodd Bros. Circus, and exhibited it at the annual Danville fair. He arranged for the local Pepsi bottling company to sponsor his six foot long big top—with sideshow top and circus wagons—covering most of



Harry Dann, shown here on Beatty-Cole in 1960, was one of Dodd's mentors. Chalmer Condon Photo, Pfening Archives.

two tables. More importantly, Dodd placed a handwritten sign on the exhibit encouraging fairgoers to chip in money for his college savings fund. Though the term “ding joint” was unfamiliar to him at that time, that’s in essence what the youngster was running. It was his early-acquired ability to pan for gold from almost anything connected to the circus that enabled Dodd to sustain a decent standard of living in his adult years.

The event that cemented his connection to the circus was the one day stand of the King Bros. and Cristiani Combined Circus in Danville on April 17, 1952. After seeing the Cristiani family dominate the performance, “I hung around the show in the afternoon. My mother came back with me later and met the Cristianis, because she knew my interest,” Dodd said.

The teenager also revealed his fascination with circus lore to anyone in the backyard who would listen. At that moment, as Dodd acknowledged many years later, his mother recognized that “we’ve got a problem here. This kid is not going to give up lightly.”

“I wanted to be with the circus—and I’m being very honest with you,” Dodd told the writer. “Whatever it takes, I’m going to be in the circus. I did tumbling in high school; I did acrobatics. I used to walk all the way across the gym floor on my hands and up the steps of the stage. I watched *Sealtest Big Top* [on television] on Saturday mornings, even built myself an aerial rigging in my backyard.”

Trained to Fly Above the Ring

Unable to afford the traditional trappings, Dodd stretched a cable between two stocky oak trees and suspended his trapeze bar with borrowed clothesline. Discarded water pipes completed the rigging.

“Now that I think of it, I used to practice fifteen, sixteen feet off the ground,” Dodd remembered. “I had to be out of my mind, but I didn’t want to be down low; I wanted to be up high. Basically, I taught myself an aerial act: the single trapeze.”

It was no surprise to friends and neighbors when Dodd left home in mid 1956 to join on the freshly minted Cristiani Bros. Circus. But that was only after he assured his mom that he would return to Danville to complete his high school education that fall.

His mother “didn’t encourage me; she just said, ‘I want you to do what you love and what you want to do.’ I mean, if she had not met the Cristianis earlier, I’m sure she would not have let that happen. But she was impressed, and she knew it would be all right.”

After boarding a northbound Greyhound bus in Danville, and after a stopover in New York City for his first taste of pizza and sighting of massive skyscrapers, eighteen year old Dodd arrived on July 20 in Syracuse, where Cristiani Bros. was making a two day stand.

Just four days earlier, Ringling Bros.—dogged by labor union strife—had pitched its sprawl of canvas tents for the last time at a racetrack near Pittsburgh, and Dodd was aware that several of the Big One’s marquee performers had brought their routines onto the smaller but talent-laden Cristiani show.

“I was out watching the setup, and I remember one man coming up to me and saying, ‘I thought the circus was a thing of the past and that it closed.’ But, you know, circus is circus.”

With the Clyde Beatty and King Bros. shows also having closed in recent months, the Cristianis were ideally poised to fill the vacuum and to complete the season as a big winner at the ticket wagon.

“What a mistake John Ringling North made” in pulling the plug midway along the 1956 route, Dodd observed more than a half century later. “What a mistake!

“Why, if he was going to do it, didn’t he say, ‘This is a farewell

tour?’ [Instead, he quit the tour and took the circus train back to winter quarters at Sarasota.] You know, ‘You’ve got to see it now because it’s going to be over.’ Can you imagine the business and the PR they could have created from that?”

Years later, “I talked with Merle Evans [Ringling band director], and he said, ‘We could see it coming in ‘55. We didn’t think we were going to get through ‘55.’ So yeah, it was inevitable; they knew it was going to happen.”

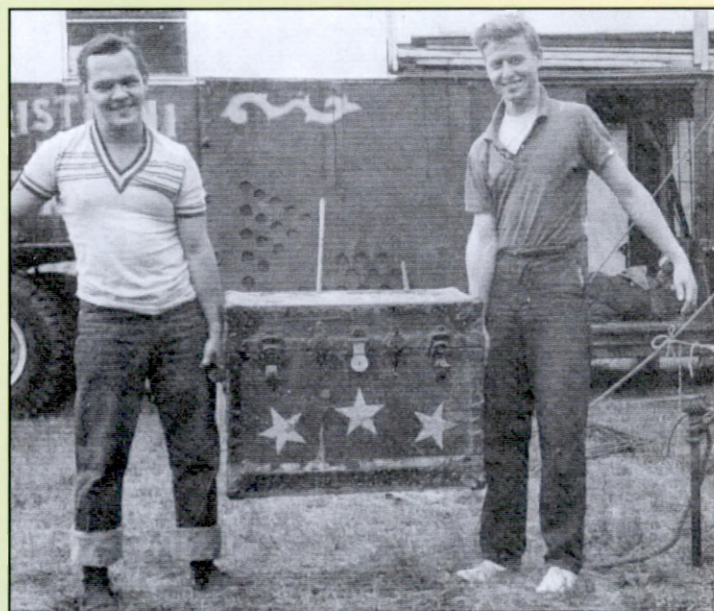
Directed to Clown Alley

Dodd had little time to dawdle on the Cristiani lot.

“When I got there, they said, ‘What are we going to do with you?’ So the first thing I said was, ‘I don’t want to be a prop hand. I don’t want to put up the big top. I want to be in the show.’”

Setting up grandstand chairs inside the big top was his first assignment. Because of New York’s restrictive child labor laws, kids weren’t allowed to earn free tickets on circus day, Dodd explained. “Everybody did it—showgirls, performers—for about \$20 per week but only while we were in New York state.”

In his second day on the show, Dodd became a clown, a task for which he was ill prepared. Fortunately, he had good tutors—producing clown Billy McCabe and Harry Dann, a veteran joey who had taken on the job of announcer on the 1956 tour.



Billy McCabe, left, and Dodd carrying a Taylor trunk during the latter’s first week in the circus business on Cristiani Bros. Circus in New York state in 1956. Kenneth Dodd Collection.

McCabe, born William Betts, had joined Ringling Bros. in 1954—not as a clown but as a waiter in the cook tent, a job he held for two seasons. Dodd said McCabe’s request to be a Ringling fun maker had been rebuffed by personnel director Pat Valdo—himself a former clown. Valdo reportedly told McCabe, “All of the old boys are coming back” to the aging clown alley. McCabe later became a runner at the Ringling-Barnum winter quarters for assistant manager Walter Kernan, who teamed with Frank McClosky to take over management of the Clyde Beatty Circus in mid 1956. McCabe switched to Cristiani Bros. at the start of the 1956 season, realizing his desire to clown. Not long after, he was the boss clown. “We later became partners,” Dodd said, a relationship that lasted until McCabe’s death in 1989.



Billy McCabe, shown here with Antoinette Cristiani on the Cristiani Bros. Circus in 1960, tutored Dodd in the art of clowning. Cliff Glotzbach Photo, Pfening Archives.

Dann was the older of the two coaches, also the more experienced in the art of funambulism. Dann had been on the Ringling clown alley from 1943 to 1947, then migrated to Polack Bros. He later clowning on the Ward-Bell outfit before signing to tour with the Cristiani show.

"Harry Dann was

probably one of the most beautiful whiteface clowns and talented whiteface clowns that I ever worked under," Dodd recalled.

More importantly, Dodd inherited the picture clown role and costuming from Dann, who subsequently rejuvenated his clowning routines with Dodd and McCabe on postseason Shrine dates.

"The first clown walkaround that I ever did was a wonderful walkaround Harry Dann had done, using one of his most prized props," Dodd said. "And I'm doing professional walkarounds that had belonged to them."

Dodd Chooses "Picture Clown"

Reflecting on his greasepaint career, Dodd admitted, "I never thought I was a funny clown." However, from his early days on Cristiani Bros., he reasoned, "If I can't be the funniest clown, well, I'm going to look the part the whole way. I had great wardrobe, [and] I took great pride in my appearance."

A ruffled collar that framed his face distinguished his character from other whiteface clowns. A clearly defined smattering of red makeup on the tip of his nose, high arched brows, a pointed hat atop a red wig, and a form-fitting costume completed Dodd's ring persona. In those days, he recalled, many a joey carved his bulbous fake nose out of a Ping-Pong ball, which was then painted red. The nosepiece was secured by rubber bands threaded through drilled holes in the sides of the ball.

To be a true picture clown, Dodd was instructed, "skin doesn't show." White makeup must cover the face and neck completely, and the hands must be covered with white gloves. "I didn't have gloves on one day," he recalled, "and this kid looked [at] me and said, 'You're not a clown. I can see your hand there.'"

A distinctive characteristic of the picture clown is his or her supportive role, he pointed out. He was almost never the brunt of a trick—no pie in the face, no water aimed at him, for a simple reason: "It would spoil my very neat

costume."

He clearly remembers the 1956 Cristiani Bros. performance, which opened with elephant leaps performed by "the [Cristiani] brothers and anybody who could do tumbling"—rola bola artist Freddie Canestrelli and trampolinist Happy Davis among them.

"The Cristianis gave a wonderful performance," Dodd said. "It was not hit-and-run. I mean it was quality: Con Colleano, the greatest wire walker in history; Manual Barragon, cloud swing; Delilah Zacchini, trapeze, from the cannon family."

It was up to Lucio Cristiani, the show's general manager, to puncture the young clown's dream summer as the circus headed toward an August 31 stand in Danville.

"When I came on the show, I had a note" from his mother, Dodd recalled. "And the note said I had to come home a week before Labor Day to go back to school. That letter was in the office, and I was hoping they would forget about it. One day Lucio came in the dressing room, and he just turned to me and said, 'You're going home next week.' And I said, 'No!' And he said, 'Yes!' And I did."

"I Would Have Paid" the Circus

During the July 2012 interview, Dodd was asked, "Was the magic of circus the same on the day that you retired as it was the day you started?"

His response: "It's hard to explain. It was there; it was always there. I didn't make a lot of money. Circus people know the story.



Dodd in his meticulously developed clown make up. Kenneth Dodd Collection.

They didn't pay me a lot, but I would have paid them just to let me stay there."

Q: "Do you recall what they paid you?"

Dodd: "Yes, I do."

Q: "But you don't want to tell me [laughing]."

Dodd: "An interesting story about my salary. At some point the AGVA man—the American Guild of Variety Artists—came up here on one of these lots. And he said, 'We need to talk; you don't belong to AGVA.' And I said, 'OK, I will have to join.' I quote AGVA regulations where you have to get a set amount of money—you had to get that . . . I thought, 'At least I'm going to get that amount to join the show; they'll have to do it.' Well, they didn't [laughing]."

Young Dodd did return to Dan River High but admitted he wasn't focusing on scholastic achievement. He rejoined the Cristianis for the waning months of the 1957 route.

By then he was well acquainted with the family's passion for perfection in the ring and their equally passionate encounters outside the confines of the big top.

Pressed to recall some of their backyard disputes, Dodd demurred. "What else can I say? It was the Cristianis, you know. It was interesting [laughing]."

"They were the greatest riding act. Over the years I was very close friends with Art Concello, and I used to question him as you're questioning me: 'What was the greatest riding act?' And I dropped a couple of names, and Art just held his head down and said, 'The Cristianis, the Cristianis.' The Cristianis, they were tops."

Dodd did throw out a couple of jackpots on the brothers' interactions with other kinkers: "We had a very small dressing room; it was what I called a Coke top. The clown alley consisted of six people; we didn't need a big tent. This was the only dressing tent in the backyard, so some [male] performers also dressed there, including the Cristianis."

"And it would be nothing for Daviso [Cristiani] to come in the dressing tent on a horse . . . He had to lean down to get underneath the tent. He's laying down on the horse, couldn't get up. But this was amusing to him. [The brothers] did a lot of funny stuff."

"Tweety" Predated Tweeting

Another brother gave Dodd a nickname that became his ring moniker.

"We had a Sunday off [in Syossett, Long Island on August 10, 1957], and the Cristianis went to the movies to see *La Strada*. The cartoon was Tweety."

"The next day, Belmonte [Cristiani] came in the dressing room, turned to me [and said], 'You! You look like Tweety Bird. . . .'"

"I had aspired to do Tweety Bird on trap in a large cage. I had it all laid out. But an attorney friend advised me that Warner Brothers wasn't going to buy it."

That didn't prevent performers, including Vickie Cristiani Rossi [Oscar and Marion Cristiani's daughter], from greeting Dodd with that nickname in the circus backyard. Years later, at a gathering of circus folk, "I walked up to her and said, 'Hi, Vickie, I'm Ken Dodd.'"

The former circus starlet appeared not to recognize him until he uttered the magic words: "I'm Tweety."

"And she screamed, 'Tweety Bird!'"

By the spring 1958, when Dodd became a season long fixture in the clowns' dressing tent, Cristianis Bros. was truly at the top of the heap among mud shows. The performance opened with Capt. Eddie

Kuhn's mixed wild animal routine and closed with Luis Munoz being fired from the Emanuel Zacchini cannon. Oscar Cristiani brought the outfit's elephant herd up to thirteen by taking on Tony Diano's pachyderms.

As if to confirm the show's designation as "Circus of the Year," in a Fred Pfening-produced film, Paul Cristiani and promoter Tom Parker nailed down the coveted Chicago lakefront lot—in the past a Ringling-Barnum domain—for a sixteen-day engagement. With the addition of Emmett Kelly in clown alley, several other principal performers and a superb advance job, the Cristianis show reaped phenomenal publicity and many a full house.

"It was a monster show," Dodd recalled. Accommodating the expanded opening spectacular required that entrances be placed on both sides of the bandstand.

"The spec was coming in [on one side], going around the track, and they were coming out and already in the backyard when they were still coming in. And it was all themed spec,"

appropriately titled *Circus on Parade*. It was basically a repeat of the 1957 pageantry.

Learning the Value of Publicity

Though the Cristianis program attributed the overall staging to Lucio, Dodd pointed out that ringmaster Harry Dann created key elements of the opening number. "He did wonderful designs—all kinds of pagodas. People were carrying poles with cages with birds in them."

Dodd got his first taste of national publicity when a press agent assigned him to prepare a Chicago newsman for a clown alley walkaround in the matinee spec, a tried-and-true, well shopped, surefire gimmick.

"Basically, if [publicists] knew you're capable of making someone up, they hit on you," he recalled. "The reporter interviewed me while I made him up. And the next thing you know I was in Associated Press write-ups around the country."

A year later, another scribe painted an insightful word picture of the clowns' home on the road. Writing in the September 29, 1959, issue of the Tucson, Arizona *Daily Citizen*, wannabe joey Don



The Aerial Wilkens, Kenny Dodd, left, and Billy Rodgers in a 1959 publicity photo for their revolving ladder act. Kenneth Dodd Collection.

Schellie noted, "For the day, Clown Alley is your address.

"You share it with the dozen others—the pros—with whom you will work. Hugging the canvas wall of the main tent, Clown Alley is located beside the performers' entrance to the big top.

"A half-dozen battered trunks, gray from talcum powder and the dust of many circus lots, line the back of 'the alley.' Atop one a cracked mirror is propped. Brightly patterned costumes hang from a heavy rope and dance in the Arizona breeze. A towel with the red and black and white makeup of a dozen performances wiped into it is draped over a folding chair."

The Cristiani troupe of jesters may have numbered as many as a baker's dozen. But during Dodd's four years on the show, no more than six or seven were true professionals, he maintained. Other performers smeared minimal makeup—or none—for comedy routines, such as Lucio, who not only was the designated comic in the family's riding act but also clowned in the boxing gag—with dwarf clown Boghonghi as the referee and juggler Ron Henon in baggy pants as Lucio's opponent. Henon also did a walkaround in the spec wearing minimal clown makeup and toting a trombone tied to his pants. In his future tenure as boss clown, Dodd would be presented with vexing situations when non performers wanted to earn extra money by appearing in clown routines.

In addition to learning his ring craft, the junior member of clown alley was also developing his talents as a designer. At winter quarters in Sarasota, he and his partner created elephant blankets for the opening extravaganza. "I cut blankets in 1958 and 1959," he said. "Billy was wonderful when you set a sewing machine in front of him. [First], we had to go out and measure the elephants because they were different sizes. We cut them out on the floor—the plush material. We had to put the canvas backings on them."

Drawing from his earlier experience as a model builder, Dodd also was learning to create props for a variety of slapstick routines.

Back in the Air

An early closing of the Cristiani show's 1958 season—on September 11 at Aiken, South Carolina—left Dodd suddenly idled with no immediate prospects of another job until the start of the Shrine season some four months off. He had already committed to forming a new aerial routine with a friend, Billy Rodgers, in late November. It happened that Rodgers's female partner quit quite unexpectedly. Almost immediately Dodd joined his new performing partner in Tulsa, and the pair began practicing a new routine on the revolving ladder—Dodd was the primary performer at one end, and Rodgers provided the ballast at the other end of the suspended rigging. Calling themselves The Wilkens, the duo was booked on winter indoor dates.

"We were independent," he noted. "You had an agent, and you went wherever they sent you. We were on Shrine dates. [The Wilkens]

worked with a little circus that played schools and auditoriums called Byron Gosh's All-American Indoor Show.

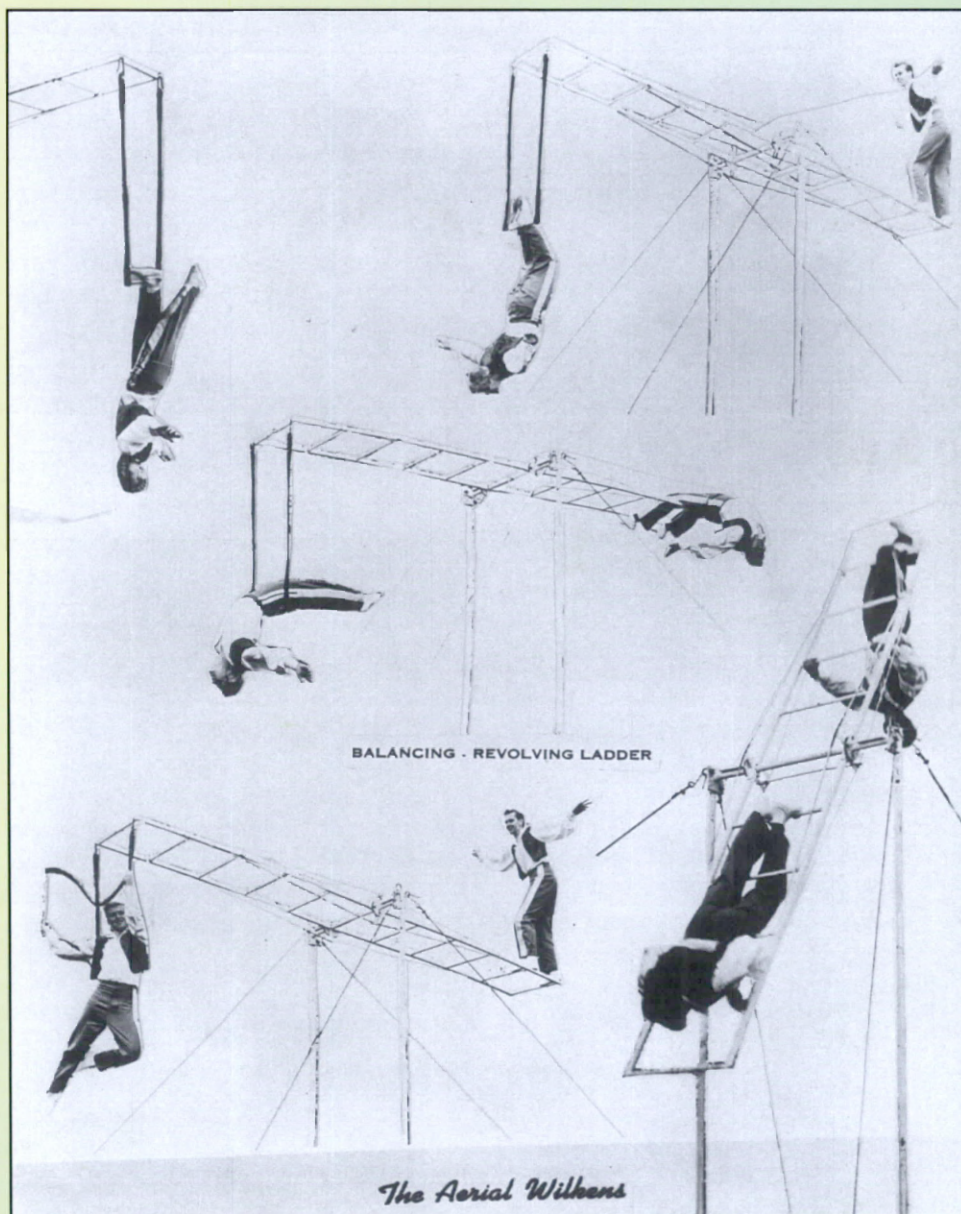
"There were a couple of TV dates and everything. And the reason I didn't stay with Billy is that come spring he didn't have any more bookings.

"I didn't have a contract for anybody. So I went to Lucio and I said, 'Can I come back?' And he said, 'Yes.' And that's the reason why I wound up back on the [Cristiani] show in '59."

Where the previous year's route had reaped good business beyond expectations, the 1959 coast-to-coast tour pushed the Cristianis to their financial limits.

There were some initial good returns on the family's off-season investment, which included a new big top. *Billboard* reviewer Irwin Kirby wrote that "the massive tent is blue with a wide yellow center stripe and red reinforcing stripes running both vertically and horizontally. Sidewalls also are blue."

The performance was equally attractive. Kirby noted a distinct change in the roster. "The voice of clown-garbed Jim Douglass rings loud and authoritatively. Only recently assigned to the announcing chore, he shows confidence, humor and affability, and is a valuable



Publicity photo for the Aerial Wilkens showing the act in action. Kenneth Dodd Collection.

member of the performing team."

In addition to Douglas and Dodd, the McCabe clown alley—according to the 1959 Cristiani route book published by Fred Pfening Jr.—included Art Gallaher, Jim Daniels, Frank Scallion, Frederico Ferroni, Gallizioi, Angel Cendoya, Glenn Hart, Boghonghi, Billy Brickle, Don Kirby, Jim Woodin, Ralph Curatoo, Peppo Cristiani, Tom Kelly, Kuzel Blotz, and Jack Cooper.

The first real indication that the 1959 season wasn't going as well as the previous season came with the show's stand in Chicago. Tom Parker was unable to book the show into the lakefront lot, having to settle for three distant lots. The so-called Chicago dates were termed "very disappointing."

En route from Davenport, Iowa to Lincoln, Nebraska, a semitrailer carrying fifteen hundred lightweight plastic chairs—only recently purchased—overturned and was set ablaze. The truck driver was badly burned. Dodd and all other circus hands were pressed into cleaning the soot from the six hundred chairs that could be salvaged.

1959 Season Goes South

Business was spotty as the problem plagued show moved into California, where the Cristianis hoped to recoup their losses. The major stand in Los Angeles was said to produce the best gross of any circus in recent years, but expenses also ballooned largely out of control.

In addition, Dodd contended, the flagship Cristiani riding act of five brothers was somewhat diminished by the absence of Mogador (Paul) Cristiani, who went ahead of the show in California and other states to spearhead promotion.

Still, there were halcyon moments for the performers, among them the backyard visits of major movie stars such as comedians Red Skelton and Lucille Ball and network TV icons such as the Nelson family—parents Ozzie and Harriet and brothers Ricky and David.

"David Nelson was in the middle of shooting the movie *The Big Circus*," Dodd recalled. "Many nights after the show, David would be



Dodd and Lucille Ball during the August 20-30, 1959 Cristiani Bros. Circus engagement in Los Angeles. Kenneth Dodd Collection.

in the air in the big top on the flying rigging. He was being coached by the Flying Valentines, with Ray Valentine and Billy Woods.

"We saw the Nelsons a lot. One night after the show, Ozzie Nelson sent cars out to the lot for anyone who wanted to go to their Hollywood home for a party. You can bet that Billy McCabe and Dodd were first in line."

Any residual optimism among troupers faded as quickly as the Los Angeles skyline in the rearview mirrors of the Cristiani Bros. caravan. With few exceptions, the remaining California dates were lackluster. "Payroll was hard to make, and some acts were leaving the show."

Dodd Becomes "Bally Broad"

Some ten days out of Los Angeles, he recalled, "Corky [Cristiani] came to me and said, 'We need you in the aerial display more than in clown alley. We only have four [showgirls] in the air and we need five.'"

"It wasn't my idea," Dodd insisted. "They knew I could do aerial work [because] I used to go in and practice on the ladders; I'd go in and do web in between shows."

From that point on until season's end, Dodd emerged from the dressing tent for each performance as a showgirl, complete with a wig provided by Corky, and with female makeup. "I was small, so I could get away with it," he laughed.

His three appearances in the main show required separate changes of costumes, each borrowed from the women's wardrobe and consisting of stretch fabric, with falsies inserted. In the opening spec Dodd rode atop the head of one of the Cristiani elephants. He later assisted from the ground as Gerard Soules walked the slack wire.

Soules's defection—he joined out with Ringling Bros. and played Los Angeles for the second time that season—left the air ballet corps even more shorthanded. "That took the star attraction out of the web number. So we still had a show. Of course, it was nothing like it had been."

Dodd recalled that his web sitter was a fellow member of clown alley, Jimmy Daniels (Piehl), who more than a half-century later continues to be one of Dodd's best friends in the circus domain.

"As far as I know, there are only three clowns alive from the '59 Cristiani show: Bill Brickle, Jimmy Daniels, and me," the retired joey said.

Things only got worse for Cristiani as it struggled through the desert Southwest and on into Texas. By the end of a three day stand in Houston, where the outfit was greeted by prominent twenty-four sheet billboards advertising the upcoming Shrine circus, the show's ability to survive was in doubt.

Even a weeklong layover in nearby Baytown failed to dampen spirits of the remaining troupers, however. Said Dodd, "We thought that when we got to Louisiana and Florida, business was going to pick up, and we'd be all right."

On October 25 at Texas City, the reorganized circus returned to the road for what the 1959 route book termed a "postseason tour" of nine dates.

Unlike his experience at the end of the previous season, Dodd would have no scarcity of work following the show's home run to Sarasota on November 3. He had already agreed to perform as an aerialist on a month long series of winter dates with Pete Cristiani's shopping center unit in northern Florida. Other acts in the one hour show included Bill Brickle's dogs and Jean Jacobs Davenport's big cat routine.



Dodd performed an aerial routine on Pete Cristiani and Ben Davenport's shopping center show early in 1960. Kenneth Dodd Collection.

Jumping the Cristiani Ship

Dodd had decided not to return to the Cristianis for the 1960 season. McCabe opted to stay for what turned out to be the family's last tour under the Cristiani Bros. title. Dodd signed on for a string of dates spanning most of the year with Hamid-Morton and Bob Atterbury. He had been working winter Shrine dates since 1958.

"With Hamid-Morton we did sixteen weeks, opening in January in Milwaukee. We closed [the initial fourteen weeks] with Newark, probably about the first of June, then went straight to Atterbury's summer dates.

"Atterbury had six shopping centers, and they were all a week long," Dodd said. "It was an outdoor show with a canopy and seats. And people sat under the canopy, and the show was out in the open.

"We basically had the Hamid-Morton acts. Not as big a show—the Frilanis [cycling troupe] were not there—but over half of that 1960 [Hamid] show was on Bob Atterbury's show. We had the Hanneford riding act; we had the perch act with George and Vickie Hanneford.

"But then we came back to Hamid in the fall for two dates, Boston and Providence."

Returning to Sarasota, Dodd began hearing rumors about the Cristianis and Ringling Bros. putting together a special tour in 1961.

He spotted a *Billboard* ad: "Going to South America. Need acts and clowns."

"So we went to Mr. [Pat] Valdo, and he said, 'Sign here.'" With that, "I was back with the Cristiani show. They had an investment in it, but they didn't manage it."

Rehearsals began in January with Dick Barstow directing. The new Ringling winter quarters at Venice was still under construction. What was to be the practice arena "was only a concrete floor with beams, no walls. We had canvas around where the walls should have

been and a top." For warmth, "we had the heaters that you would have had in the orange groves to keep the fruit from freezing. So we did, I'd say, three weeks of rehearsals—every day."

Off to South America

"It was big time." With the Cristiani family providing its riding act, and Oscar Cristiani's elephants and tumbling routines, the Ringling ensemble consisted primarily of performers who had been on the 1960 tour. "The web number was the same number Ringling did in '60—twenty-four girls in the air, same wardrobe. And the featured aerial act in the center was Delilah Zacchini-Cristiani. So it was like a Ringling show unit at this point."

Although this would amount to a total commitment for the Cristianis, the South American venture would be essentially a satellite operation for the Ringling-Barnum organization. The regular Greatest Show on Earth kicked off its 1961 schedule, as planned, in late January at Miami Beach and opened at Madison Square Garden in early April. The Cristianis on the other hand had no plans for a North American route on their return.

Jackie LeClaire was one of the established Ringling clowns who made the tour. "Jackie was and still is the most professional and talented clown in the business," Dodd said. "Jackie and I have been super great friends for over fifty years."

Ringling's team for the South American venture also included Paul Eagles, general manager; Lloyd Morgan, superintendent;



Dodd in spec wardrobe with the Ringling-Barnum South American unit in San Paulo, Brazil, March 14-April 8, 1961. Woman is unidentified. Kenneth Dodd Collection.

Guistino Loyal, equestrian director; and Audrey Smith, aerial display. The show's bandmaster, Raymond Escorsia, formerly had wielded the baton on Cristiani Bros.

"Ringling Bros. Barnum and Bailey Circus International," as it was billed, played three South American cities from February 15 through May 28. (Douglas Lyon's "Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus, Spring 1961," *Bandwagon*, March-April 1964 details the tour. See *Bandwagon* index on CHS website.)

Performers were flown from Tampa. Animals were shipped out of Jacksonville by freighter. The show premiered in Rio de Janeiro.

In addition to the Ringling showgirls, "We had Brazilian girls in Rio. We had a dance troupe [Tibor Rudas] from Europe—about eight girls that did acrobatic dancing," Dodd remembered. "It was a powerhouse show." Besides the Cristiani riders, the talent included the Great Unus, juggler Dieter Tasso, the Konyot chimps, and rider Alberto Zoppé.

After completing its well-received engagements there on March 12, the unit made a four-hundred mile jump to its second of three stops, São Paulo, Brazil.

"We went from Rio to São Paulo by train. And it was horrible; the old New York [Central] coaches had no air conditioning, so we kept the windows open. And I remember banners on the side of the train: 'El Espectaculo mas Grande del Mundo'—'The Greatest Show on Earth.'"

"São Paulo was good; it was a good date [March 14–April 8]. And then we went to Buenos Aires [April 14–May 28]." Dodd recalled the reception by the locals during that twenty-seven day stay as "so-so." "They didn't think we were as big as we were."

Because of hyperinflation in the Argentine economy, the national currency was devalued. Fortunately, the 120 member cast and crew were contracted to be paid in American dollars. "I had been in Shrine shows in Canada where you'd get half and half [half in Canadian and half in American currency]. Though this development was costly to the Ringling bottom line, it was a distinct benefit to the personnel.

On completing its six week run in Buenos Aires, the entourage was flown back to Tampa. Many performers had already inked contracts on other shows. The Cristiani family members went their separate ways.

Beatty-Cole Beckons

Dodd and McCabe were content to take time off in Sarasota until their next booked dates kicked in that fall. Since their traveling and living expenses in South America had been absorbed by the show, "I actually saved money down there."

"Billy McCabe and I took a setting with a trailer park. Old railroad coaches were parked around us, and [the Ringling] winter quarters was just one hundred feet, two hundred feet north of us. So we rented the coach, you know, for four months."

Their anticipated downtime proved elusive.

"We had been back in Sarasota maybe three or four days," Dodd recalled. As they passed the old downtown Sarasota Hotel, they were spotted by Walter Kernan, for whom McCabe had worked on the Ringling show. "Kernan said, 'What are you doing now?' I said,



Dodd, left, and Billy McCabe in web wardrobe on Beatty-Cole in the 1960s. Kenneth Dodd Collection.

'Nothing.' And he said, 'Get with the Beatty show.'" For the past four years, Kernan had been Frank McClosky's partner on the Beatty-Cole outfit.

After being assured that they would be able to fulfill two Canadian dates that fall for producer Paul Kaye, the pair agreed to sign on.

"We left the next morning for El Dorado, Arkansas and joined the Clyde Beatty-Cole Bros. Circus." Except for occasional leaves of absence the huge truck show would be their home for the next sixteen years. They also continued to book their clown routines on various Shrine circuses during the winter months.

Principal among the producers who employed their comedic talents was Al Dobritch, who had assumed the old Orrin Davenport dates. But, noted Dodd, "Paul Kaye was the reason for the success of Dobritch as far as the big towns—Cleveland, Detroit, Los Angeles—all of those. [Kaye] knew the business; he put the [Dobritch] shows together."

Assessing the management of the Beatty-Cole show, Dodd ascribed "a tremendous difference" between the two top men whose names were atop the circus program to a difference in operation styles.

"McClosky we never saw; he was a businessman. And



Program for Ringling-Barnum Circus at the Luna Park arena in Buenos Aires, Argentina, April 14-May 28, 1961. Pfening Archives.

Kernan cared about the show. Now, I'm not saying that McClosky didn't, but Kernan was the one who really cared who the acts were, the quality of the show . . . everything. He was a super showman." (Kernan died unexpectedly of a heart attack in 1963.)

There was yet another manager whom kinkers listened to above all others. "Frank Orman was god," Dodd laughed. "He had been on the Cole show. He was Beatty's right-hand man for years. And McClosky didn't question Frank Orman."

Because McClosky's interest in the circus was primarily financial, Orman was left to manage day-to-day operations.

"We'd get on a lot and we'd say, 'Looks bad, looks muddy. We can't get on.' Orman would walk out there and say, 'That's it,' meaning, of course, that the show would play the lot.

But Orman "was getting up in years, and he started training Johnny Pugh to take over his part." Pugh arrived on the Beatty-Cole show as a performer in 1962, six months after Dodd. Pugh used the clown's dressing tent to change into his costume as a trampoline artist. He became a manager later that year. Pugh was promoted to general manager in 1965 and assumed control of what had become a dowager enterprise in 1981, initially with Doug Holwadel as a partner and later as the sole owner.

Attesting to Pugh's all-round acumen in circus operations, Dodd recalled a specific instance when he saw his boss in the thick of action during setup. "I mean, he's the manager, and I look out there and he's sitting out there sewing up the big top. . . . And look at the show today; it's there because of Johnny Pugh."

Even before coming onto the Beatty-Cole epic, Dodd had seen the show's namesake in action as a headliner on various Shrine dates where both were booked.

He described Clyde Beatty as "a very nice man, a total gentleman, and an unbelievable performer. "When Billy and I first joined the show, they told us, 'Clowns follow the cat act. Be ready. The act may run half an hour, it may run five minutes, but be ready.' I watched the act, and almost every show it was different. But you watched it because you didn't know what was going to happen."

Oddly, even though he had only recently been named producing clown, Dodd often was missing in the initial clown routine when the show opened that 1965 season on Long Island. Beatty had undergone stomach surgery during the previous season and now, though suffering the ravages of cancer, was attempting a comeback. Dodd was essentially Beatty's caregiver. "In Commack, I went back to help dress him. . . . He did the act and he collapsed at the end. I was out the first part of the show to get him back to his trailer to help him get out of his wardrobe.

"Yeah, he did [the act] on nervous energy, and because he had to do it."

Accepting the reality that he could no longer bow to his approving fans, Beatty quit the ring and returned to his home in



Clyde Beatty, left, with Eddie Stinson, long-time Detroit Shrine Circus Chairman in the early 1960s. Don Smith Photo, Pfening Archives.

Ventura, California, where he died in July, 1965.

Hartman Out, Hoover In

The legendary wild animal trainer's successor was Red Hartman. "Red was amazing. He didn't have the showmanship that Clyde did, but he did the act." However, "we couldn't depend on him. I'm going to tell it like it is."

Plagued by bouts of alcoholism, Hartman increasingly went AWOL, an absence that kept clown alley on even greater alert. "We could see the cage being taken down even before the show started. People are sitting there, and the prop hands are out to take the cage down, and the act hasn't even worked. . . . So that's when Hoover comes in."

Dave Hoover, who earlier had taken over management of Clyde Beatty's Jungleland in North Miami, held the solo spotlight as the premiere act on Beatty-Cole through the late 1990s.

As Dodd and McCabe enhanced their reputations on the Shrine circuit, they came to the attention of an influential voice in the circus production business. Vander Clyde Broadway, known professionally as Barbette, wrote this glowing tribute of their abilities to Louis Stern, Polack Bros. producer, in a letter dated August 14, 1964: "Dear Mr. Stern: At last I have found two funny clowns: Billy McCabe and Kenneth Dodd. One is a very good dancer, and both are young and can move. They are clean whiteface clowns and one thing they do especially well is the washwoman gag. They make it funny, not vulgar. They have some good entrees.

"Kenneth Dodd and Billy McCabe are now on the Beatty Show, but it is not what they are doing, but what they capable of doing, that I am writing you about.

"I know how you feel about clowns and I agree with you, but there are exceptions and these two are in that class. . . . Kindest personal regards, Barbette."

Dodd Tames Clown Alley

Just before the start of the 1965 season, Dodd found himself unexpectedly promoted to producing clown on the Beatty-Cole outfit. His predecessor, Eddie Dullum, simply didn't show up at the mud show's winter quarters at DeLand, Florida. That gave Dodd the opportunity to introduce some much needed changes.

On setting up his trunk for the first time in the clown's dressing top in 1961, Dodd had noticed that the routines were old and staid, as were some of the joeys. For example, dwarf clown Merlin "Shorty" Hinkle, who had been on the Sparks and Downie shows, "had problems walking at times," Dodd said. "He couldn't run around the track," which limited his ability to work in fast paced gags.

He also attributed the lackluster performance to Dullum, whose performing career dated back to the Cole and Beatty rail shows and who continued on the Beatty-Cole outfit under McClosky and

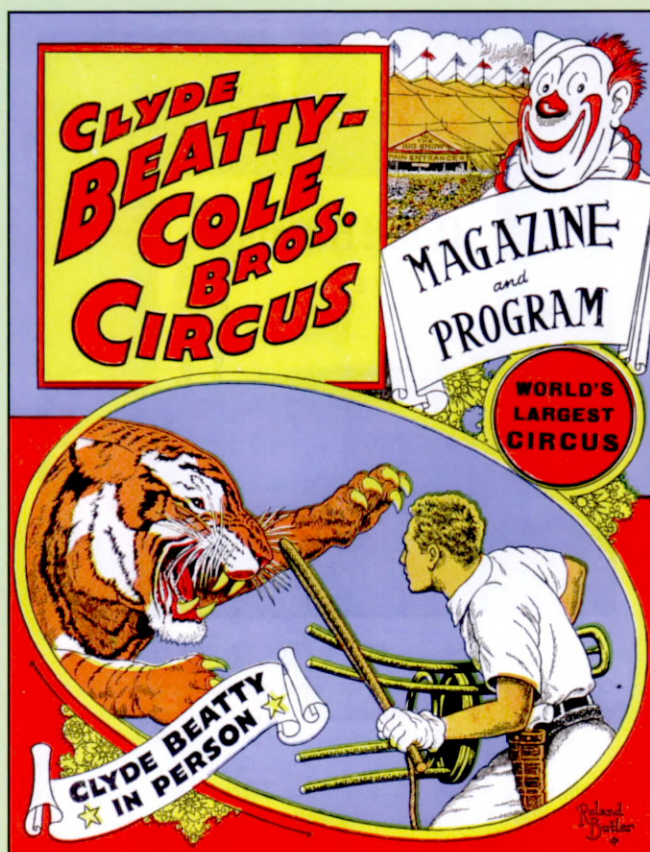
Kernan. "I'm not putting Eddie Dullum down," Dodd emphasized. "He was the hardest working clown I ever saw. They just did the same levitation act, for example, and they did it every year."

"The show itself produced what Eddie used. When I first got there, they built the firehouse. They didn't produce it; they built it and said, 'Eddie, do this.'"

Dodd set about adding a modern flair to traditional acts and adding new talent. He also was determined to be more assertive in selecting personnel under his aegis.

"With the knowledge that I acquired over those years—I watched the Ringling show's production numbers, Paul Jung's numbers—I thought, 'We can do that.'"

"What I would do, I would take themes that were popular. *Bonnie and Clyde* became a sensational movie. So we took an old clown gag, the safe cracking gag, and we put Bonnie and Clyde in there breaking into the safe. So what are you going to do with the rest of the clowns? I just dressed them up as convicts .



Cover of 1965 Beatty-Cole program drawn by Roland Butler, the great artist, press agent and bill writer. Dodd became producing clown that season, during which Clyde Beatty died. Pfening Archives.

.. because you wanted to identify them to the audience. I made the wardrobe."

In his efforts to create turnover or to fill vacancies in his troupe, Dodd ran up against a time-honored and all too familiar management practice of using clown alley as a dumping ground for relatives, aged performers, or workers whose meager wages needed to be supplemented.

"I had a little input on who I could use, because sometimes the show had this idea that 'we can use him' [as a clown]. And I'd say, 'Yeah, you can use him because he drives a truck. You've given him to me as a clown, and I can't do anything with him.' Maybe he'd be the father of the wire act or something, where they had to give him a job."

"I would get together with Wilson Storey, the agent, and he would say, 'Dodd, this guy needs a job.' And I would take a look at him and I would say, 'Yeah, but I can tell you right now he can't run. I need somebody who can run. If I want to fly him in the air in a harness I had to have somebody that could move



This parody of the movie *Bonnie and Clyde* on Beatty-Cole in the late 1960s was one of Dodd's most famous clown production numbers. Dodd made all the wardrobe worn in the act. Kenneth Dodd Collection.



Jimmy James, left, and Dodd on Beatty-Cole about 1968. Dodd recruited James for the Beatty show's clown alley in 1966. Kenneth Dodd Collection.

up to it."

As a result, "We had a couple of older [troupe members]; they belonged to the acts, and they basically were putting makeup on and making an appearance. You were really limited in what you could do; I had to work around them."

Recruiting Jimmy James

"Of the ten clowns, I had basically four that I called workers." In addition to McCabe, these included Bernie "Ko Ko" Kallman, Louie Nagy, and Jimmy James.

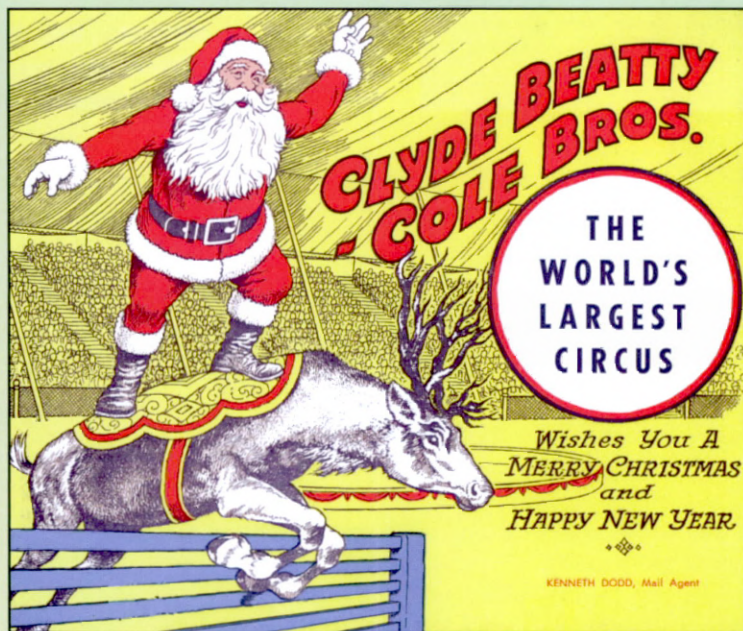
Without a doubt, Jimmy James (nee Plott) became Dodd's most significant recruit and one of the longest-serving performers in the history of the Beatty-Cole show. Ironically, a fluke brought him to the boss clown's attention in the spring of 1966, as Dodd explained.

With Beatty-Cole's season opener at Commack just a few days away, "We had built a reducing machine, and I had booked this very large, six-foot clown, who didn't show up. And I thought, 'We'll have to build a fat suit for one of these little [clowns];' and we didn't have time to do it. We had to scrap the reducing-machine gag until I got a big clown. "And the reason we wanted Jimmy: he was big. Yes, he was big, but he'd never clowned."

At the time, James was in the wardrobe department of Ringling-Barnum, which had already opened its monthlong stand at Madison Square Garden, conveniently just a hop, skip and jump away from its smaller rival's venue.

"So I went to Jimmy—actually both of us talked to him. And he said, 'I would love to do it. But I cannot leave the show without giving notice.'"

Two weeks later, "he joined us in Vineland, New Jersey. So Jimmy came in 1966 and stayed until 2001." Few of that show's longtime followers are likely to recall seeing him in the fat suit, but many came to know Jimmy James as the show's long serving ringmaster and performance director.



Dodd, as mail agent for Beatty-Cole, used this Christmas card. Kenneth Dodd Collection.

Mailman Mints Money

Even before he assumed the duties as boss clown, Dodd garnered the prized back lot assignment as mail agent. This provided him better than usual access to the show's grapevine, thus enabling Dodd to snap up juicy tidbits of intelligence on his compatriots' extracurricular activities and spending habits. Many performers shelled out \$1.50 a week for Dodd's mail delivery services, which included the latest edition of *Amusement Business*.

He was such a successful salesman of the circus publication that in 1965 *AB* named him "the No. 1 Sales Leader on Circuses the entire season." By 1967 he had claimed *AB*'s best-salesman accolades for "all circuses the last five years." Butchers, on the other hand, declined to pay him for mail service because "most of them never received any mail."

It was during the off-season that Dodd and McCabe witnessed the collapse of the Wallendas' seven person pyramid during a Shrine performance at Detroit on January 30, 1962, in which two members of the high-wire troupe fell thirty-five feet to their death onto a concrete floor.

The two clowns were standing at the performers' curtain when the accident occurred. Dodd said McCabe ran into the ring and grabbed a pad used by the Hanneford family riding act. Other performers quickly followed, stretching ropes attached to the pad, which they used as a makeshift net. According to a UPI account, the seventeen year old top mounter of the tri-level formation, Cristina (Jana) Schepp, fell from Karl Wallenda's grip into the pad but bounced to the floor, suffering a concussion.

Contrary to the tradition of clowns rushing into the ring to divert the audience's attention, the performance was suspended while emergency crews tended to the victims, Dodd recalled.

Calling All Clowns

A decade later Dodd found himself pressed into emergency crowd control duties in his hometown on the Beatty-Cole show. A springtime storm hit the circus big top, frightening the audience—including twenty-eight of his relatives prominently seated in the first two rows of reserves.

An after report in the April 14, 1972 *Danville Register* documented the response: "As last night's thunderstorm broke above the city, bedlam accompanied it . . . as wind-driven rain billowed canvas and swayed poles.

"The sound system went dead and performers in a trapeze act in the center ring began to come down their guy wires.

"Trainers tightly held their animals as the wind gained velocity and the top of the tent whipped up and down and threatened to fall.

"Former Southsider Ken Dodd and his fellow clowns came running to man the exits, giving calm directions and clowning to put the crowd at ease.

"During a circus emergency, clowns are the first people called to set things right or, at least, to smooth and amuse audiences until things come back to normal.

"Before the 9:00 P.M. storm, thousands of Danvillians attending the matinee and half-rained-out evening performance watched Dodd direct his crew in hilarious 'gags' set between lion-taming and acrobatic acts.

"Dodd played a blonde nurse in drag, hot dog vendor . . . and a regular ruffle necked funny man. Those unfamiliar with his makeup did not know who he was from skit to skit, as he changed costumes, along with the others, each time.

"His innovative makeovers of traditional routines—and of clown alley—made Dodd a standout."

Kudos in Variety

Among others, circus critic David Lewis Hammarstrom, later biographer of John Ringling North, singled out Dodd and his brood for praise in the January 3, 1975 *Variety* under the heading "Circus Flight Thrills In Moon Age; But Clowns Seen Obsolete Species."

After noting the lack of a single clown on Carson and Barnes's previous tour, the all-too-brief appearance of four aging veterans on Polack Bros., and Irvin Feld's work in progress among Ringling Bros. Clown College graduates, Hammarstrom described the Beatty-Cole clown alley as "perhaps one of the most credible ones on the road."

"Kenneth Dodd produces there with the irreverent assistance of 10 not so young merry backsliders. Together they've developed a charming ensemble spirit that approaches true animation. . . . They come at you sideways, off-axis—victorious dropouts and overgrown babies, mad hatters without hats and safecrackers in high heels. . . .

"Dodd and Co. have come up with a takeoff on the 'Godfather' with Dodd as the bullet-riddled mobster who, when shot, loses water through well hidden ducts in his costume. The effect is hilarious. Another routine has the troupe in an exploding house caper. Fortunately (and considerably) it resorts to a pop rather than an atomic explosion, the kind that is all too familiar in clowning."

Hammarstrom aimed his only criticism of the Beatty-Cole jesters not at their routines but for their being "reduced to the ranks of coloring book merchants and peddlers of other assorted gimmicks as the show wears on (and it does without them)."

Dodd took issue with the author's remarks, pointing out that coloring book sales enabled him and other clowns not only to pad their incomes but also to engage their fans, however briefly, up close and personal. "I quickly learned that you can't afford to buy a new



Dodd in costume on the Beatty show. Kenneth Dodd Collection.

Winnebago [motor home] every four years on a clown's pay," he emphasized. "That's why I had four jobs around the circus."

Dodd and Hammarstrom maintained a friendship over the years, and the writer not only interviewed the retired clown for his 2007 book, *Fall of the Big Top: The Vanishing American Circus*, he dedicated it to him.

One admiring fan who identified himself as E. L. Logan of Ponca City, Oklahoma, expressed his impressions of clown alley in a letter dated December 29, 1973, to winter quarters. He wrote that the Beatty-Cole performance "had many outstanding attractions. Yet," he continued, "I believe no circus is quite complete without several clowns. Your circus had them. They were very good. However, there was one I noticed in particular that I thought was exceptionally good. Makeup and costumes, etc. This clown went by the name of Tweedie. Whoever Tweedie was, was a riot."

Dodd expounded on the hit-or-miss nature of his craft to another scribe—Jane Oliver of *The Daily Iberian* in New Iberia, Louisiana—in a 1975 interview. Headlined "Ken Dodd charms them under the big tent," the article read, in part: "Experience is the most important thing in becoming a clown," [Dodd] said. "It takes from one to two seasons with the circus to become a real clown. . . .

"Clowning is a very serious profession," he said. "We work on acts before audiences and make changes when weaknesses in the act show up. Some ideas seem fantastic but don't come across. It's like a Broadway production. . . .

"Clowns aren't people," he said. "I never let a child see my skin or see me smoking a cigarette outside the tent. If a child sees that the clown becomes a man. . . ."

Dodd pointed out that he never smoked anywhere—"and I'm proud of that."

Mother's Illness Takes Precedence

True to the bromide attached to clowns—laughing on the outside while crying inside—Dodd was enthralling audiences but was becoming increasingly concerned for the welfare of his mother. Beginning in 1964, Mrs. Dodd, experiencing the onset of Alzheimer's disease, would be waiting alone in her son's trailer

in the circus backyard when he was occupied by his duties inside and outside the big top. When her condition became unmanageable on the road, Dodd took her home to Sarasota so that she could receive round-the-clock care.

In an effort to continue fulfilling his responsibilities on the show, he arrived at a tentative solution, as noted in the July 14, 1975, column by Billy Barton in *Circus Report*: "CB-CB producing clown Ken Dodd has taken a leave of absence, and his duties are being handled by Jimmy James."

Dodd's partner alternated in this arrangement, as noted in *Circus Report* on June 21, 1976. "Billy McCabe is no longer with the Freedom Train [a tour commemorating the nation's two hundredth birthday]. He is caring for Kenneth Dodd's ailing mother while Ken is trouping with Beatty-Cole."

A year later Dodd left the ranks of clowns, permanently as it turned out. He turned over his duties as producing clown to Jimmy James.

In the meantime McCabe returned to his craft to help provide an income. The April 31, 1978 *Circus Report* revealed that McCabe was on Gerard Soules's short-lived show, Circus Girard. Later he joined on the advance with Circus Vargas, retaining ties with that show for almost a decade.

Staying in Sarasota, Dodd worked on events at Van Wezel Theater and other local venues.

McCabe's attempts to lure Dodd back to clown alley were unsuccessful. "I couldn't do it anymore," Dodd explained. "I just thought I needed to be away."

Dodd finally yielded to persuasion, flying to California on several occasions to visit the Vargas show. He helped out "on the candy wagon" but declined repeated offers to return to clowning.

In 1989 McCabe returned, exhausted, to Sarasota, where he died three weeks later.

Since his retirement, Dodd said he assumed his clown character only one time—in the 1990s—and that was at the request of the Ringling Circus Museum to appear in a Florida tourism ad promoting the circus city.

"I had not been in makeup for years, and when I put the wardrobe on, it fit. It was amazing!"

He continues volunteering at the museum, especially when the staff needs help identifying circus photos in its collection. Dodd also maintains a large collection of photos and films documenting circus life in the twentieth century. A model circus, complete with rubber figures that he had ordered from the Marx toy company in New York, is boxed in a closet.

A longtime friend of Dolly Jacobs and Pedro Reis, the husband-wife owners of Circus Sarasota, Dodd frequents that show during its annual monthlong stand in Sarasota. He occasionally visits other circuses in the area.

Toward the end of his 2012 interview, Dodd responded to queries concerning his ring career.



Jimmy James, shown here in 1979, took over the clown production numbers after Dodd's retirement in 1976. Fred Pfening, Jr. Photo, Pfening Archives.

lighthearted person to make a good clown," he said. "Of course some people, especially kids, expect you to be laughing all the time.

"But we're no different than anybody else. Sometimes you're tired and you just don't feel like laughing."

The author wishes to thank Kenneth Dodd for devoting many hours on the phone answering pesky questions subsequent to our two hour interview at Baraboo on June 16, 2012. BW

Fourteen years into his hobby of writing articles and producing videos about circus performers and owners, CHS trustee Lane Talburt remains a self-professed "lot louse" who frequently prefers to hang out in the circus backyard or in the hallways of arenas while the performance proceeds.

Q: "Did you perform for yourself, or did you perform for the audience?"

Dodd: "A little of both. You perform because you want to be a part of the business . . . I didn't want to be a roustabout; I wanted to be a performer. I wanted to be in the business. . . ."

Q: "And during the time you were a clown, was your heart in it day in and day out?"

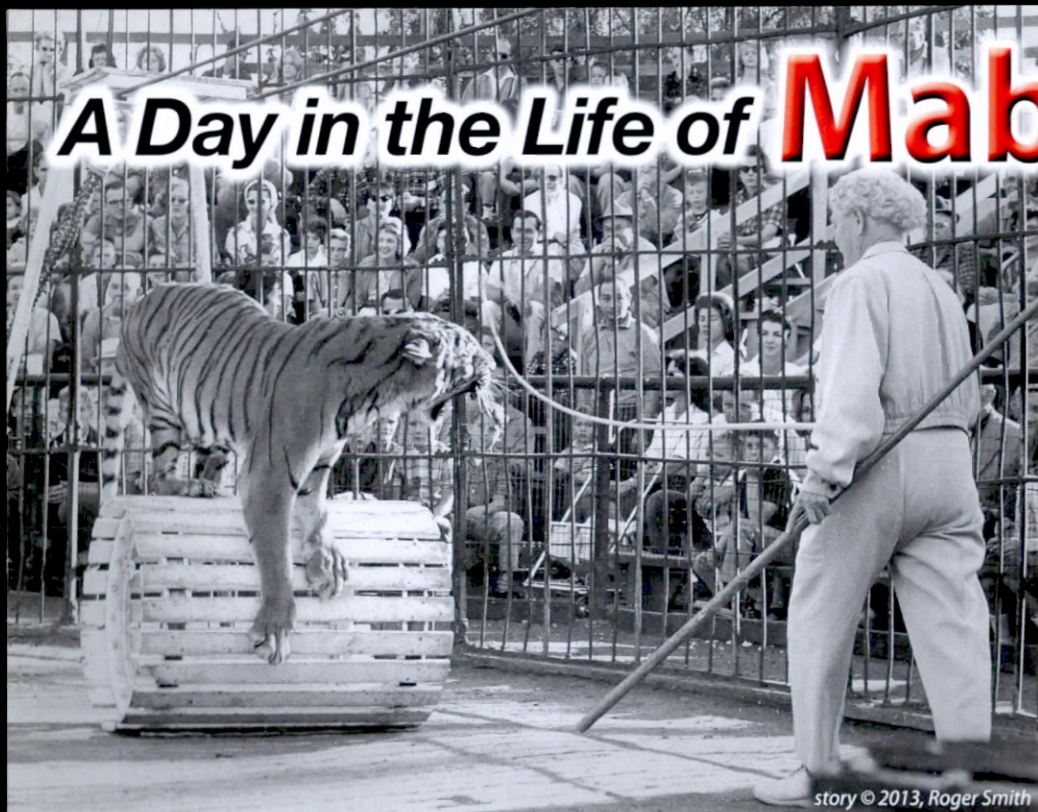
Dodd: "Yes. I had pride in my appearance and in what I was doing. Yes, the heart was there. It has to be. You can't just go and be there because you say, 'Well, I've got to do something and I'm here.' You have to have that real want and drive or you wouldn't be able to stay there. I couldn't have spent twenty-something years if I didn't have that drive."

Dodd's feelings about his profession, as recorded in his hometown newspaper in 1972, remained applicable four decades later: "I think it takes a very



Dodd last appeared in make up and costume in the 1990s to promote tourism in Sarasota. To his amazement, his costume fit. Kenneth Dodd Collection.

A Day in the Life of Mabel Stark



story © 2013, Roger Smith

by Roger Smith

Endless story lines come to mind as I develop my work on Mabel Stark, circus history's Tiger Queen, and my revered mentor, but the lessons of her unwavering daily regimen most strongly remain in memory. For her to maintain so well-ordered a life, after her hard-scrabble origins on a Western Kentucky tobacco farm, the structured disciplines of Louis Roth are credited. A lanky Hungarian out of the exacting Hagenbeck school of wild animal training, honed by authoritarian masters, Roth exemplified the canons of his profession.

Farm girl Mary Ann Haynie's survival instincts sharpened early. Orphaned at seventeen, she soon was abandoned by her six younger siblings, who chose life with a harsh stepfather over remaining with her as a family. Embittered and alone, she resolved to carry on by making her own breaks. Her epiphany was effected by chance when she saw her first tiger, King, on a visit to the Al. G. Barnes Circus winter quarters in Venice, California. She recalled the year as 1911. For Mary Ann, there was no looking back. Her apprenticeship in the care and training of tigers was extensive and grueling, but for advancement, perseverance was crucial. Success was assured once she recognized the need for one event she meticulously managed to achieve: Marrying Louie Roth.

With Mary Ann's evolution into Mabel Stark underway, Roth's acumen was played in

plucky blonde, training was secondary. The performer's spotlight could wait. Her incipient concern, winning quick favor with Roth, was care of the animals. Astute and attentive, she plied the fine points of old school husbandry, and conditioned her stock to glistening health. Cage wagons assigned her were all but antiseptic. Her cleaning and feeding implements were scoured and lined up as if for military inspection, each in its own place.

Her First-of-May status aside, Mabel understood if the ambience of the barn suffers human malfeasance, the perils of animal tending escalate. "Around mein animals," Roth insisted to his staff. "I vant ever't'ing nice und quiet." His simple rule was law. Miscreants were axed. Roth's dutiful bride embraced his philosophy that big cats, like children and the elderly, thrive on routine. Once life is habitual, their comfort in what to expect lends guarded assurance that their keeping, yet fraught with hazard, will more likely be fluid. The professional imperatives Mabel honored in her formative season found permanence as personal pursuits. During the ensuing half-century, these values sustained her career, and her name.

The 1938 season was a damaging one for circuses. When Mabel closed with Al. G. Barnes & Sells-Floto Combined that year, she had worked her biggest act of between 18 and 22 mixed lions and tigers. Weary of Depression-era circuses, she courted retirement. At season's end, accepting the standing



Louie Roth inscribed this photo of himself to Mabel as follows: "With best wishes to my dear wife Mable From Louis." Mabel described her marriage to Roth as "the war years." Mabel Stark Album, Roger Smith Collection.



Mabel with her famously difficult black jaguar N----r on Ringling-Barnum 1923. Burt Wilson Albums, Pfening Archives.

enticement of her longtime friend, animal importer Louis Goebel, she entrained from Sarasota to California, and set up housekeeping in Thousand Oaks. But seductive notions of retirement, wistful at best, vanished when her eyes fell upon Goebel's manifests of green tigers, arriving ever and again. Settled and confident, she immersed herself in training. At once a fixture, she witnessed, and withstood, the tempests of change. Her workplace originated as Goebel's Lion Farm. As motion picture demands for his exotic stock soared, the front sign proclaimed Goebel's Wild Animals. From 1946 to 1956, Billy Richards and Trader Horne titled it World Jungle Compound. From 1956, through my advent in 1965, to the closing in 1969, we were Jungleland.

One unchallenged utterance among big cat trainers bore truth for 46 years: "If you didn't break in at Thousand Oaks, you didn't break in." There, to my lasting gratitude, just over three seasons of my five year tenure in the old place were side by side with our preeminent Queen of the Tigers.

We begin with what she told me of her mornings at home.



Mabel Stark's last home in the Old Town section of Thousand Oaks, California in 2007. Author's Photo.

4:45 A.M.

In her small, white frame cottage on Crescent Way the alarm scolded the predawn darkness. Mabel arose to the latest news and weather. She loved reciting detailed accounts of breaking events, but for this veteran of the tented shows, weather forecasts were paramount. She studied temperature ranges of the day, and remembered forecasts for the entire week.

As the broadcasts continued over Hollywood's KNX radio, she whipped up her favorite breakfast—two slices of cornmeal mush, fried in real butter, sided with three strips of lean bacon, two slices of dry toast, and two steaming mugs of black coffee. Complimenting this repast were prescription medicines and vitamins ordered by Dr. John Brisbane, her longtime physician.

Well-fortified, she bathed and dressed for work. She favored trousers and long sleeve blouses with low necks and flowing collars, created and sewn by her personal tailor, our neighbor Hazel Huber. The cleft of her blouse was adorned with a tasteful rhinestone brooch. On nippy days, she chose a plaid overshirt, two of which are aging in my trunks, mementoes of her dressing room. She laced up specially fitted nurses shoes of white, size two. As her tan hand tooled leather purse swung from its shoulder strap, she tucked in a scarf. Upon leaving, she touched up her tight curls, ever blonde (with a little help from Rosie, at Bobbie's Beauty Shop). For most of Southern California's summer days, she donned a straw bonnet with a shoulder width brim, which critically obscured her peripheral vision. Once in place, the ungainly vexation was worn right into the arena, to the unending exasperation of those of us standing guard.

6:20 A.M.

Mabel's rangy, white-over-maroon 1954 Buick was herded down Thousand Oaks Boulevard like a cattle drive, its diminutive driver striving to peer over the dash-board. At the same moment each morning, she wheeled the massive sedan to her undisputed slot beneath the stately oaks, a few steps from Jungleland's main gate. Before exiting the car, she removed and carefully sequestered her driving glasses.

6:30 A.M.

Mabel walked out of her dressing room, across the pavement from her tiger cages, where she had deposited her purse, pressed her curls once again, and snapped her antique Corbin padlock. Passing through the large gate at her string, or cage line, she checked the man-door lock on Goldie's exercise pen, then hauled up the cage door, allowing her star tiger, nicknamed Lady Bug, out for an hour, and gaining us an empty cage to begin cleaning. Tiba and Toby took turns going out, so today Toby was tunneled into the arena to explore its peculiar sights and smells, or, as Mabel observed, "to read the morning news." With one of the big males out, we had two empty cages, side by side. Mabel readied the wheelbarrow under the footboard of Goldie's cage. At the outside cage wall, an old broken knife was jammed into a plank, and there she had folded her daily *Los Angeles Herald-Examiner*, for all to scan before the shows. And in significance all its own, her metal folding chair, like a tiny throne, painted in the blue-and-white scheme of her props, and initialed with her circular red MS logo, silently validated this cage domain as hers.

My arrival at Jungleland found Mabel's act consisting of five tigers—the three females were the Bengals Goldie and Dale, and the tough Sumatran Ouida (pronounced Yu-da). The two big

Tiba and Toby, were outsized Indian tigers, the variants we call King Bengals. The three non-performers were Mommy, Khan and Prince. Thus, Mabel presided over eight tigers in her ten cage string.

From Goldie's empty cage, Mabel stood squinting at the clock on Concession Stand No. 1, making sure I showed up at 7:00 on the dot. Benny Bennett had arrived at this time for 31 years. It was he, the Compound's Uncle Ben, whose endorsement ushered me into Mabel's inner circle. Without his imprimatur, I would not have acquired this privileged status. The hard work proved a pleasure, and so did my awareness that I was coming to know a circus legend I had read of since boyhood. Frankly, I stood in awe of Mabel Stark. Soon enough, I found out I liked her.

So it was, through these many early mornings, that my coveted apprenticeship came of age. As I rounded the corner right on time, this day would be a five show Sunday.

7:00 A.M.

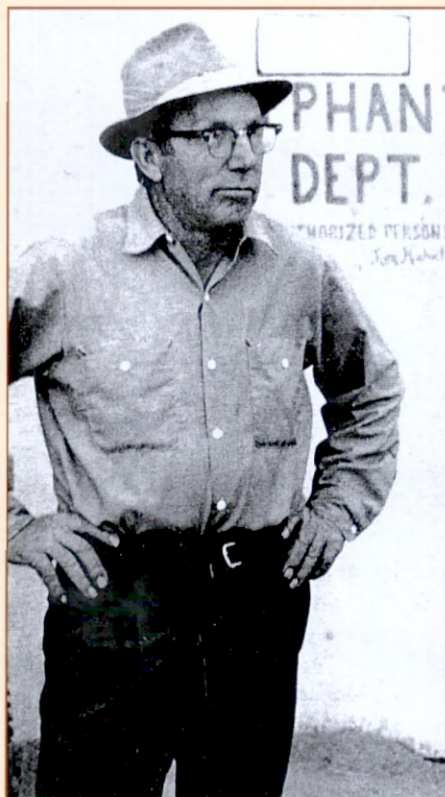
"Good morning, Roger!" Far from the dour bearing ascribed by her critics, her greeting was unfailingly cheerful, her smile infectious. "Good morning, Mabel!" I replied, ducking quickly into the back tunnel, and taking down the broom from its hiding place over



Mabel Stark and Prince on postcard sold at Jungleland in 1958. Pfening Archives.

Goldie's roof. One sad lesson had been long-since learned—if Miss Lady Bug ever glimpsed a single straw, the broom was clawed down and gleefully shredded. At the end of a day's sweeping, it was tucked away, her quick eyes carefully denied. Mabel's warehouse brooms, one of which I've kept, had the heavy bristles bound with No. 9 wire, still no match for a playful tigress.

Charles Alexander Bennett (1907-1990), known as Uncle Ben, was Mabel's top assistant for 31 years. He brought the author into Stark's inner circle. Roger Smith Collection.



With Goldie's cage swept clean of yesterday's soiled sawdust, I squeezed through the partition door and into Toby's cage. When finished there, I backed out into the tunnel and dropped the door. Mabel shifted Tiba and Dale into the cages just swept, and called out, "All right, Roger! Three and Four are clear!" I raised No. 3's back door, and propped it up with a length of hickory. With Ouida shifted downline, I could clean three in a row. By now, the wheelbarrow was heaping. Mabel's crippled hands, sundered by fang and claw, had pushed the heavy load along the line, then turned it back to the gate. I ran it up the hill to empty it in the manure truck.

Floors for the big cats should be kept as dry as possible. To serve the purpose, these tongue-in-groove oaken decks were spread generously with fresh shavings. Mommy's nocturnal amusement, however, was to worry her suspended water bucket until her bedding was slush by morning. Her fun redoubled my toil.

Mabel shifted Prince and Khan, and called me into the last cages, as the wheelbarrow filled again. Mabel back-shifted the tigers to their home

cages, and we called in Toby from the arena. From her exercise pen, Goldie mounted one of Louie Roth's old wooden pedestals, and gracefully stole home. I raced back to empty and scrub the wheelbarrow. Mabel and I had worked at an intense pace, and now with the floors freshly cleaned, and everybody home, rank anticipation accelerated to carnal demand. It was feeding time.

7:30 A.M.

Uncle Ben had schooled me back in the ramshackle, time-honored slaughterhouse, demonstrating how to cut the feeds each of Mabel's tigers were to have.

Goldie's cherished cut was a hefty shoulder-blade of beef. She royally frolicked with her favorite breakfast, rearing on her hind legs, flashing it to the world. But she let us have it with disdainful howls on rare days when no shoulder blades were on hand, or when, heaven forbid, I returned with horsemeat.

Tiba and Toby relished the massive shanks—the forelegs—off quarters of beef. Having clawed them into violent possession, these guys got down to business, ignoring the histrionics of Lady Bug, next door.

Ouida craved a heavy cut of neck, the vertebrae split open so her barbed tongue could access the delectable spinal cord. (We carefully inspected neck cuts, this being the injection site for the lethal combination of chloral hydrate, succinylcholine, and magnesium sulfate, the deadly concoction of choice then, when animals on the hoof were put down. If we found, or suspected, necks were "needled meat," their entirety went to the waste barrels for removal by the "Bone Men" from California Rendering.)

Less the glutton, Dale was ambivalent, but preferred hind-quarter

cuts with bone in. Spurning unseemly haste, she offered good cage manners. Her claws were gingerly unsheathed, hooking her feeds as if serving herself from a silver platter.

As Mommy's meat was forked in, she resolutely posed in a corner until her water bucket was filled. Once the others were fed, Mabel resignedly returned to top off Mommy's water. Only then would she condescend to dine.

Prince and Khan were dangerous. We made sure we gave them cuts that went under the 6-inch footboards without getting jammed. Mabel repeated her dire warning every day, as both mature males dropped to their shoulders and shot their forelegs out full-length, their claws slashing madly in excitement for their feeds. Forking meat into their cages demanded exceptional caution. If those flailing talons had ever hooked us, there was no chance of rescue.

Having fed out, I rolled the wheelbarrow back for washing. Mabel stepped into her rubber boots, pulled on her long, yellow kitchen gloves, and hosed the blood off the cage fronts and concrete walkway. Next, she filled her water bucket and carried it to her dressing room to wash her hands. Nothing prevented her from using the running water in the Ladies' Room, except perhaps her half-century of sharing canvas



Mabel at Jungleland. Goldie is the top mounter. The Sumatran tigress Ouida approaches from the bottom.
Roger Smith Collection.

dressing tops, where such ablutions were realized by tradition.

8:00 A.M.

"Good morning, Annie!" Mabel cried, as she strode into the Snack Bar. The venerable Annie Roper was already fetching Mabel's first beer of the day, an ice-cold can of Hamm's. Mabel was a small woman, a scant five-two, durable, but with a fragile build. Dr. Brisbaine admonished her to keep her weight up, and to Mabel's wry delight, he scripted three cold ones a day. Annie folded a napkin and studiously wiped the dust from around the rim, as Mabel counted out her thirty cents. Contented that her tigers were fed, she allowed herself to sit a spell. Her chair faced out from the far right corner table, situated to allow her keen surveillance of everything we did in the Big Stage Arena. But show time was later.

At this hour, lo, the jackpots ensued. Mabel was an engaging raconteur of show tales, surprisingly enchanting, routinely hilarious, sometimes ribald.

History was recounted, great names remembered, and old shows revisited. Her yesteryears returned undimmed, and the regulars among us were lustily entertained.

Adult big cats, as we kept them, eat their fill in half an hour, but



Entrance to World Jungle Compound, late 1940s or early 1950s, when the park was owned by Trader Horne and Billy Richards. The park's name was changed to Jungleland in 1956. Elephant carvings on sign were from former Al. G. Barnes Circus Elephant Tableau wagon. Later given to Circus World Museum, they were incorporated into rebuilt version of the wagon. Circus World Museum Collection.

for the exercise of their teeth and gums, we afforded them another 30 minutes gnawing time on their bones. After an hour, most of the well-sated had pawed the bones aside, as we returned to complete the morning regimen.

8:30 A.M.

Mabel refused to take bones away from animals who still wanted them, but generally, we could proceed with boning-out. If either Prince or Khan remained possessive of their bones, it usually was not that they wanted them, but that they didn't want us to have them either. Mabel's rule was, "Never aggravate an animal over what you gave him," so when we had to, we let them be. With the long-handled scraper, I raked the bones allowed us into the wheelbarrow, cage by cage. I deposited them in the slaughterhouse barrels, and packed on a heaping load of bedding from the sawdust bin. Beginning with Goldie's cage, Mabel lifted the footboards with her eucalyptus pole, and I slung in three barn scoops of sawdust per cage. As I removed the wheelbarrow, Mabel came along with her hose, refilling the water buckets, under Mommy's close inspection. With bedding down, Mabel swept up the errant flakes of shavings, and left a cage string well serviced, and squared away for the day.

9:00 A.M.

We were done. Elsie Wood was in her booth selling tickets at 9:00, and Mabel wanted us finished by then. Her tigers were set until her first show time, but I had the other three cage strings to care for, plus the big cage wagon around back.

My primary, or North String, of twelve cages, the one first assigned to me by our

Foreman, Robert "Doc" Hayden, ran from a stand of bamboo adjacent to the Snack Bar, down to the Big Stage Arena. Running south from the Arena was the Long String, consisting of sixteen cages, fourteen of which were open, with two "blind" cages for new mothers with cubs. Our reliable breeders kept these last two predictably occupied.

Then, beyond an archway, ran the old "Gut String," as we called it, where animals who weren't performing were fed the entrails of carcasses riven by Uncle Ben. Uninformed new-hires, appalled at the gore, blanched at feeding guts. They held out for muscle-meat bone-in cuts, tidier in the wheelbarrow, and more readily dispatched under the footboards. Over time, those with rare animal sense noticed the robust retirees were gleaming in fitness. Should these anointed few inquire, it was explained that the intestines and vital organs provide nature's purest nutrients, supremely beneficial

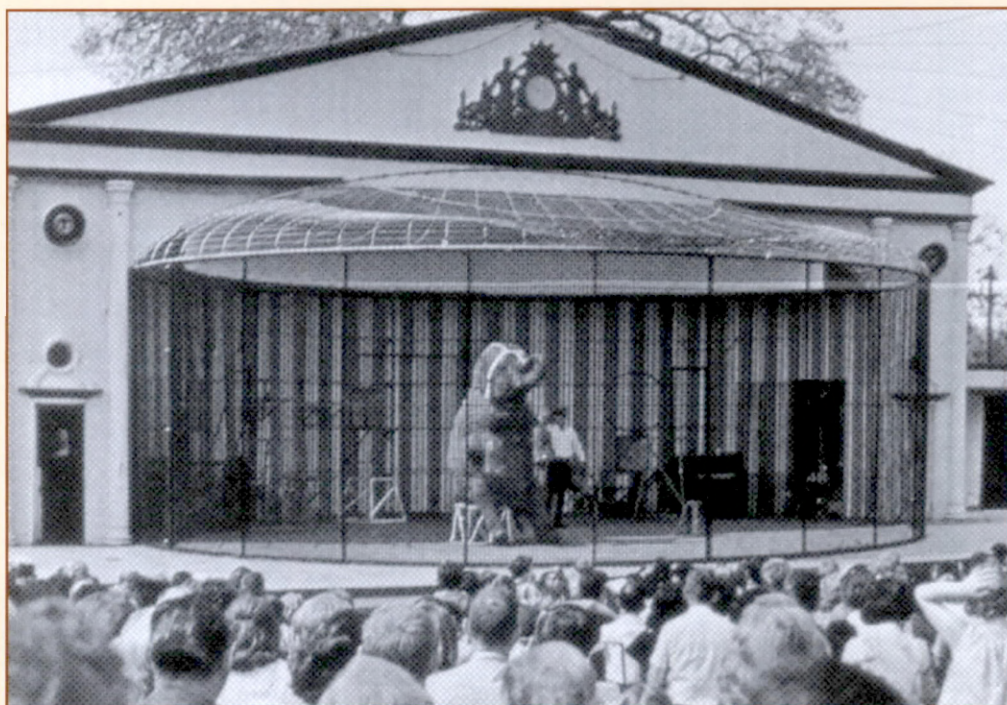
to the carnivore. However reluctantly, the more promising attendants usually came around, yet still rarely lasted. Formally, this cageline was more acceptably named the Leopard String, home to ten of the smaller felines.

Behind the Long String reposed our shop-made cage wagon, built in 1940 by Uncle Ben and Earl LeGrand. Its 40-foot length had three main sections, home to five lionesses each. With twelve cats in my string, fourteen to sixteen in the Long String, ten in the Leopard String, the fifteen girls out back, and Mabel's eight, I was cleaning and feeding, bedding and watering for 61 big cats every day. Depending on the number of denizens in cages behind my primary string, the number, for one 20-month stretch with me working solo, rose to 72. Mabel counseled me against burning out. For anyone else, she would have been right, but I was in my glory. As with my still recent time with Clyde Beatty, I had never loved work like I loved this. I didn't let the front office wise up, but I could never get enough of it.

11:00 A.M. Showtime—The Big Stage Arena

On Sundays, we performed the first matinee on the Big Stage

Arena. By the nature of our work, acts varied. The menu usually lined up Chief Henry Tyndall and his chimps, trained goats often worked by Norman Pitchford, occasionally seals, and Roland Raffer's trained parrots. A single elephant, either Taffy or Bimbo, was shown by Arky Scott. Hubert Wells paired his Hungarian Vizsla dog Amber with Lolita the leopard. Ten year old Randy Runyon was our unicycling juggler.



Jungleland's Great White Stage, venue for acts at park. Pfening Archives.

I closed the program with the Jungleland Fighting Lions, an act rigorously schooled to me by Dick McGraw. During this time, importantly, I began with tigers.

Mabel scrutinized my every move with my acts, first the lions, and next the tigers, and gave me intense notes after every show. After I towed off and came over for my first beer, Mabel would say, "Come on with your beer, and let's take ourselves a walk." It was an almost whispered suggestion, with hushed undertones of command that was intended to be overheard. Every head in the Snack Bar snapped up, and every eye followed us, as we strode out of hearing. Under the envious scowl of the entire payroll, Mabel took me to school, walking me around the lot arm in arm, laying down the tenets of her Old School heritage in conspiratorial tones. These were precious moments to a young trainer. In the tradition of the taciturn old-timers, I kept her confidence. Scorning endless entreaties to



Mabel signing coloring books for kids at her dressing room door, which was across from her tiger cages, 1966. Roger Smith Collection.

crack, I never revealed a word she said. Wanton ears found that eavesdropping was taboo. Feigning disinterest, an imprudent few dared to meander along, pretending not to listen, but plainly “on the Erie.” Mabel scattered them like buckshot. “You there! This is a private conversation! Scram outta here!”

12:00 Noon

“All right, Roger! High noon!” Mabel smiled. “Head on over and rake out my arena, and set my props!” Every head snapped up again. Thanks to Uncle Ben, and my earnest labors for both of them, I was the one she called on. Beyond respect and common good form, I felt honored to say, “Yes, ma’am.” Realizing mine was a singular privilege, there was an undeniable trace of pride in my step. When a bitter few anticipated notice, and were never summoned, backstage jealousy leapt to its cue. Each time I rose to do her bidding, the daggers of discontent rose behind me.

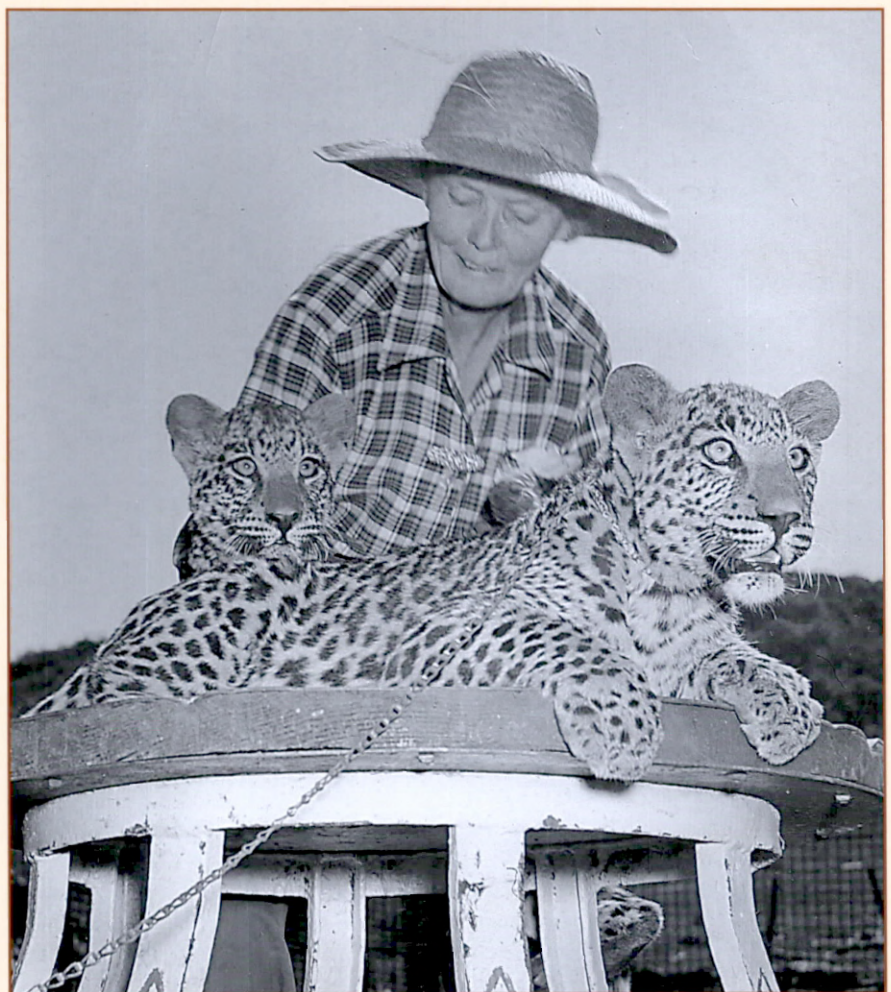
A relic of the early Barnes show, cold-sawn, bent, and bolted by Red Forbes, Mabel’s pig-iron arena now bespoke decades of rough handling. Set as directed by Louie Roth, there were nineteen sections, six feet by twelve, to form a 36-foot diameter cage. In the brochure, this showplace, with its weathered stadium bleachers, was called The Tiger Arena, but to us, of course, it was Mabel’s. Surrounding it were a dozen or so of the great oaks that gave the burgeoning village its name. Daily, the leaves descended to carpet the dirt floor, and daily I raked them up. When working for Mabel Stark, the reader might have gathered, you didn’t overlook a single one.

Mabel followed me to her cageline some ten minutes later, and went in to check her props. I knew the plot, and set them all precisely. I had scuffed them in the dirt, which in California can shift at times, and squared them for proper setting, so they wouldn’t totter under the animals. I had to smile, nevertheless, when Mabel went along fingering every last one of them for a final tweak of her own.

12:30 P.M. Showtime—The Tiger Arena

Announcer Jim McLellan greeted the crowd. Mabel opened. Goldie was topmounter, as Toby and Tiba formed the crest of her pyramid. Dale flanked the right, while Ouida, bristling with Sumatran fury, charged beneath them to the seat at center. We never knew whether Ouida would stop, or launch an attack straight onto Mabel. Praise God, she held her mark. Then, styling with her grandly flourishing hand, Mabel broke the pyramid back to seats. Goldie rolled the barrel and did the rollover. All the while, Mabel cooed her tigers with soft commands, until the point in the act when she made certain of holding the attention of each one. She spoke to them quietly until she came to Ouida. Then she bent down far too close to the Sumatran’s fangs, pointed, and exclaimed, “And YOU!” In the most chilling moment of the act, Ouida leaned forward on her seat with an ear-shattering roar, tightly gathered and set for a spring. Her head went almost to the ground, her haunches high, coiled to

make that one fatal leap with nothing to stop her. At that moment, to our heart-stopping dread, Mabel inexplicably turned her back, strolling casually to center cage. On days when Mabel wore that blasted bonnet of hers, she would never have seen Ouida coming. But every time, as Mabel posed serenely during Jim’s wire-walk



Mabel Stark in the bonnet that obscured her peripheral vision. Mabel Stark Album, Roger Smith Collection.

announcement, the Sumatran held seat. For those of us outside, our collective pulse spluttered back to life.

For all her Compound acts, Mabel had boasted a wire-walking tiger. The more celebrated of these were Whitey and Bill. Now the twin cables, twenty feet long, and six feet high, featured Tiba. The giant King Bengal was long and heavy, a worthy successor for the star trick. Once he was across, back, and resealed, Mabel began checking them off one by one, down the tunnel, and into the house. She turned, styled cheerfully with that inimitable flourish of her hand, and gracefully bowed. (A detailed description of her Jungleland acts is a story for another time.)

1:30 P.M. Showtime—The Big Stage Arena

After Mabel had cooled off in her dressing room, she ambled into the Snack Bar. Annie dusted the rim of Mabel's second can of Hamm's and had her hamburger and onions sizzling on the grill. Dr. Brisbane warned his patient against fats, so Annie made quite a show of pressing down on the meat between thick folds of paper towels. Well-nourished, Mabel sat back and surveyed the show on the Big Stage. Afterward, day by day, we strolled along the cagelines for fastidious and private counsel. In my era, these closely guarded lessons, enhanced by those of Uncle Ben and Dick McGraw, would not have been heard anywhere else in the land.

2:30 P.M. Showtime—The Tiger Arena

Mabel was 76 when I arrived. On weekdays, she performed once. This day, a Sunday, she worked two shows. Impressive and irrepressible in her perseverance as a tiger trainer and performer, she took immense pride in rising early and putting in a long day, laden with risks other women would not know. But there had been those many arduous seasons, and the telling severity of her tiger attacks could no longer be ignored. Agile and fervent as she remained, there was no getting around the fact that the Old Sister could tire. The restorative nap she took on her dressing room sofa between shows was literally what the doctor ordered. It made the difference. She returned to the arena in fine fettle for her second matinee.

4:00 P.M. Showtime—The Big Stage Arena

We worked our closing performance on the Big Stage. During my crucial break-in time, Mabel stayed for this last show and divested herself of my notes. I was working well by then, but nothing made my spirits soar as they did when time after time, as we marked my triumphs in the cage, Mabel would smile and say, "Hooray for our side."

Then, the sun into its descent over the Conejo Valley, a fulfilling day she had begun some twelve hours earlier, was drawing to a close. It was moving to see her confident, maternal smile as she made her way along the cages, verifying the wellbeing of her sleepy tigers. Reassured, she bid them a soft good-night, got her things together, and exited the main gate. In the car, hoping no one was looking, she retrieved her hidden driving glasses, and herded that sprawling Buick back home.

6:30 P.M.

Mabel caught the evening news on TV, primed and anxious to recite the latest at our next 7:00 a.m. Earl LeGrand had the same heart condition as Mabel, and his wife Pauline cooked a special diet for them. She made their two suppers, and brought Mabel's in time for her enjoy while sipping her evening Hamm's, and making



Author Roger Smith just after finishing his act at Jungleland in 1968. Roger Smith Collection.

sure her castaways were happily surviving on *Gilligan's Island*. At last, her dishes put away, and the coffee pot standing its post, she turned down her covers. As darkness stole upon the small home in our village's Old Town, Mabel set her alarm, and invited sleep to promise another tomorrow with her tigers.

Near the end of our time together, I noticed Mabel remaining a little longer one late afternoon. She had bid good night to her tigers, and returned to sit another moment with me in the Snack Bar. It was something she had not done before. She gazed quietly across the lot, her blue-gray eyes savoring the animals, now serene in their cages, just at sunset. "I've had you over three years now, Roger," she recalled quietly. "I don't know it all, and you never will, either." After a silence, "But I've taught you everything I know." As she turned to me, her eyes were misty. "Keep it going for us." And she rose and shouldered her purse, and walked out through the door, and turned left to follow the path around to the gate.

We had long understood the Old Place was faltering. Already known to be in slow fade-out, the day I've recounted was dearly held. There would be more days like this one, yes, but a precious few, achingly sacred, unbearably fleeting.

Thank God for Louie Goebel, and his Compound with its shifting fortunes and changing names, for our endearing village of Thousand Oaks, for Uncle Ben, and amen, for my days in the life of Mabel Stark. BW

A Texan, Roger Smith was four years old when he first saw Clyde Beatty perform. He later worked for him in 1964. In 1965 he went to Jungleland. He also worked on Miller-Johnson, James Bros., Hubert Castle, Clyde Bros., and Beatty-Cole.

Bill Kasiska's Letterheads

GREAT LAFLEUR

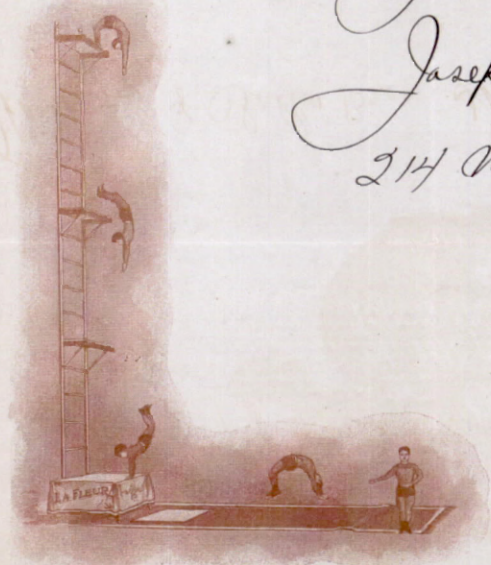
ORIGINATOR
OF THE MOST SENSATIONAL
ACROBATIC ACT OF THE CENTURY

Forepaugh & Sells Bros. Shows. Prov. R. I. April 3rd 1905
Columbus Ohio.

Dear Sir

I here acknowledge receipt
of call for April 17th

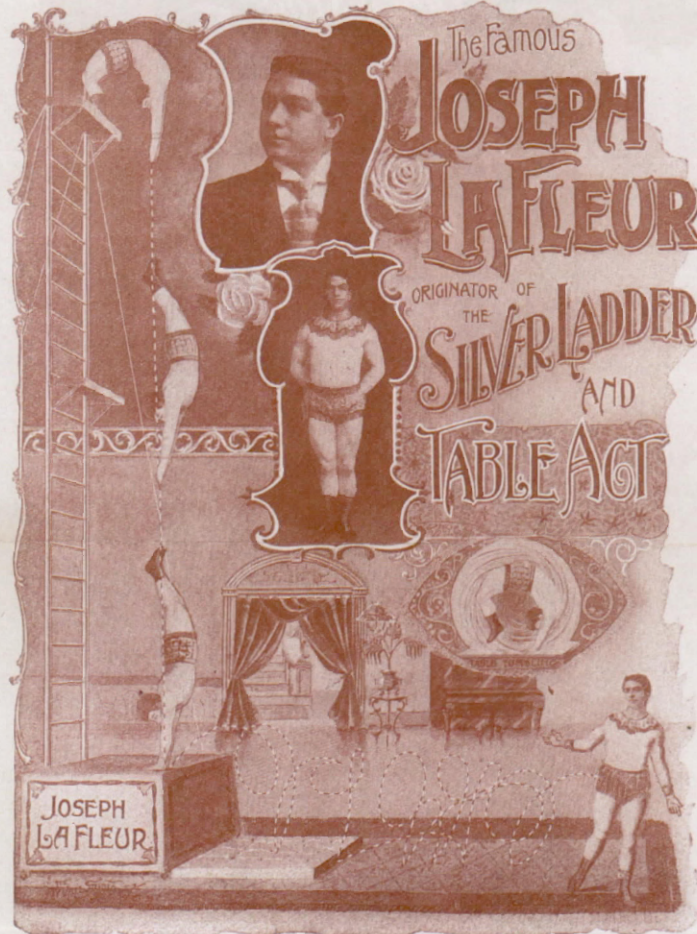
I am Sincerely
Joseph LaFleur.
214 Messer St.
Prov. R. I.



SEASON 1905
EN ROUTE
FOREPAUGH and SELLS BROS. SHOWS
JAMES A. BAILEY and RINGLING BROS.
Equal Owners

Jackley Drops are a series of tricks in which performers fall backwards from a tall ladder to either a ledge on the ladder or to a stand on the ground, landing on their hands before executing a somersault, occasionally to the shoulders of an understander. The turn first appeared in America in 1873 and faded away by the early 1930s. It seems extremely dangerous to modern sensibilities, which may explain why it apparently hasn't been presented anywhere in nearly sixty years. Joseph LaFleur was one of the great practitioners of the art, even if he wasn't its originator as he claimed. After appearing on small circuses, he hit the big time in 1895 when he signed with Ringling Bros., spending a number of seasons on that show and the Ringling-owned Forepaugh-Sells Circus. This letterhead, utilizing both the front and back of the stationary, was hot off the press when LaFleur used it to answer Forepaugh-Sells's 1905 call notice. Illustrations of his act appear on both sides of the sheet. LaFleur retired in September 1919 while on the Walter L. Main Circus, unsurprisingly citing back trouble as his reason for exiting the field. The wonder is that he did the drops for 30 years.

MANY IMITATORS, BUT NO EQUALS!



Important to Managers.

San Francisco Orpheum.

"La Fleur deserves to be called 'great,' as he is the most sensational acrobat seen at the Orpheum in years."—SAN FRANCISCO CALL, April 6, 1903.

Los Angeles Orpheum.

"Joe La Fleur, who was featured for seven years with the Ringling

circus, succeeded in doing something new in the way of tumbling. His agility is of an order that causes thrills, and that is what the Orpheum audience demands of acrobats."—LOS ANGELES HERALD, April 21, 1903.

St. Charles Orpheum.

New Orleans, La.
"La Fleur does not seem to care

where he falls, or from how great a height. He makes women shiver when he climbs a ladder into the flies and drops backward, striking a table and then the floor. His act, however is neatly sensational; it is gentle excitement, warranted not to stir the blood too swiftly."—DEMOCRAT, Mar. 24, 1903.



Uncle Sam Paints the President 1942

by: Warren M. and Nikki J. Zapol

This is a story about my Uncle Sam. I discovered in my mid-30s that I was adopted, that my name at birth was Michael Warshaw, and that my father Nat had a talented older brother named Sam. I never met him. Thirty years later, while visiting my brother, I saw some of Sam's paintings for the first time. There were portraits of my birth mother and father, of whom I have no memories. But I was hooked, and wanted to know more about my uncle's work.

The most exciting revelation was that Uncle Sam painted four giant portraits of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt for the Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Circus in March 1942, exactly when I was born!

Sam's personality shone through his many self-portraits painted throughout his life. In a particularly intriguing self-portrait, Sam depicts himself as Rembrandt. His devoted daughter Florence described him in her memoirs this way: "I absolutely adored my father. My father's brown eyes were always smiling to me. A craggy sort of a face, I always thought he might look a little like Abraham Lincoln with a somewhat jutting jaw and under bite, large ears and nose, and straight black hair parted on the side. . . . To me, he was always physically strong, completely wise, kind, capable of any undertaking and always loving and interested in anything I did."¹

Sam was born Samuel Warshofsky in Kovno, Russia on January 3, 1891, and emigrated with his parents Frade (Fannie) and Morris Warshofsky to New York City at the age of two. Sam and Nat later shortened their names to Warshaw. Morris worked as a tailor in the city, barely managing to make ends meet, and Fannie taught herself to read and write while producing and caring for a very large family. Sam was the eldest of five girls and three boys. As a child, Sam's artistic talent was evident in his chalk and coal drawings on the sidewalks of New York's Lower East Side. Starting work at fourteen he helped support his large family. When he heard about Cooper Union, a tuition free college for aspiring artists, he applied, was accepted on merit, and began his art education in evening classes. Around 1910, Sam was hired by film studios and theatres in the New York area, developing expertise in scenic stage painting.

Sam became a charter and founding member of the United Scenic Artists Union (later local USA 829). Between 1915 and 1930, he designed and painted scenery for various theatre stock companies that travelled the United States and Canada, and married Anna Goodman on May 8, 1921. A job designing and painting scenery for a stock theatre company in upstate New York brought the family to Binghamton, New York. With the Depression, however, theatre stock companies, like vaudeville, were fast disappearing and in 1929, the family moved to Springfield Gardens in Queens. For the

next fifteen years, when work was available, Sam designed and painted scenery for the Studio Alliance of New York.

So, I wondered, how did Sam, a struggling immigrant scenery designer, develop his skills as a fine artist and portrait painter? Daughter Florence's memoir explains that in parallel with his career in scenic design, which kept food on the table, Sam pursued an education in fine arts. Sam studied portraiture at Adelphi College with Pruett Carter, Harvey Dunn and Norman Rockwell. When intermittently unemployed during the Depression, he first studied and later taught at the Art Students League on 57th Street where his teachers were Kimono Nicolaides, George Bridgeman, and his closest mentor was Frank Vincent du Mond.

It appears that Sam used oils as his medium until about 1940. His subject matter consisted predominantly of indoor still lifes and portraits. Despite the changing vogue to Abstract Expressionism during his lifetime, Sam remained faithful to a realism/impressionist style. He viewed painting as a "reflection of life" and believed "progress in painting went hand in hand with the student's understanding of life." The record shows that Sam rarely exhibited, and never created a market for his paintings. He painted for the sheer joy of it. His extensive body of work is largely intact in the homes of his grandchildren.

How did my Uncle Sam Warshaw come to paint four enormous portraits of FDR for the 1942 Ringling-Barnum show? Sam's listing in *Who Was Who in American Art* led me to

the John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art in Sarasota, Florida.² The warm reply that I received from Frederick Dahlinger, Ringling's kind and wise Curator of Circus History, was my gateway into many insights about circus history, as well as more leads and information concerning the events that led to these paintings.

The leadership of the 1942 Ringling Circus was exceptional. John Ringling North gained control of the circus in 1938 and modernized the classic three-ring circus. For the 1942 show he chose John Murray Anderson, internationally famed theatre director, to stage the performances, and Norman Bel Geddes to modernize the circus. Bel Geddes was widely known for "Futurama," a small scale mock-up of the nation's future superhighways at the 1939-1940 World's Fair in New York.

Ringling-Barnum's 1942 program contained an important clue: a credit to "Special Properties by the Studio Alliance of New York."³ The Studio Alliance on West 39th Street in Manhattan where my Uncle Sam sometimes worked, had been in the business of making stage sets for several years, and had produced exhibition sets for the 1939 World's Fair, most likely for Bel Geddes.⁴ In 1941 the Studio Alliance did all the sets and floats for the Ringling-Barnum Circus,



Samuel Warshaw (1891-1954) self portrait as Rembrandt. Warshaw Family Collection.



Samuel Warshaw sketching Franklin D. Roosevelt at Studio Alliance, New York City, February 1942. Carol Bloch Collection.

which conveniently opened nearby in Madison Square Garden. Thus, it is likely that for Norman Bel Geddes and John Murray Anderson the choice of the Studio Alliance to produce the even more “Broadwayized” program of 1942 was easy.

I searched the Bel Geddes Collection in the Harry Ransom Research Center of the University of Texas at Austin to dig deeper into the story. Rick Watson at the Center found a letter from John North to Joseph Brent, an executive assistant to Bel Geddes, asking, “Will you let us know immediately who is going to do the four portraits of President Roosevelt and what photo you are going to use? I wired the President last week.”

This led me to the Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum in Hyde Park, New York. Did it have that telegram of February 9, 1942 from North to FDR? To my delight, the research librarian retrieved it. It reads: “Dear President Roosevelt: Would appreciate it if you would send me your favorite photograph. We are doing a patriotic finale for the circus this coming season which is climaxed by the unveiling of four gigantic portraits of yourself and would like to use the picture you prefer.”

Stephen Early, Roosevelt’s Press Secretary, replied to North on February 13, 1942: “This office has copies of only one uncopyrighted photograph of the President, a copy of which I am enclosing herewith. I am sending this, not because it is the President’s favorite, but because it is the only one we have.

“As you know innumerable photographs of the President have been made, most of which also are copyrighted. If you desire another study, additional to the one I am sending you I would suggest that you get in contact with almost any of the photographic agencies.”

Early closed by writing, “Permit me to assure you that your inquiry and co-operation are deeply appreciated.”

Brent informed North on February 18, 1942 that, “Norman [Bel Geddes] thinks it is a bad picture of the President. The one you used in the blue print sketch for the finale seems to me to be fine, perhaps you will want to use it? I am anxious to know who will do the work in making portraits and if mechanical details, re all this, have been

worked out, as time is getting short and things should be put in the works.”⁵

Unfortunately any subsequent transcriptions naming Uncle Sam are missing from the Bel Geddes papers. We do have more detail on the commission, however, as Joseph Brent wrote to circus vice president Henry North, John North’s brother, on February 18, 1942, “The portraits of President Roosevelt are to be painted in aniline on white satin, and band with stars at bottom of portrait is to be blue bengaline with stars appliquéd on it in same manner as on curtain. As Mr. Anderson at one stage of the game was considering using two portraits of Roosevelt and one each of Washington and Lincoln (the latter two to be used in the two end rings), please confirm with him that all four portraits are now to be of Mr. Roosevelt only.”⁶

In *The Brooklyn Eagle* of April 8, 1942 reporter Katherine Blanck described a flurry of activity at Studio Alliance in preparation for the Big Show: “Seeing the circus ‘made’ behind the scenes is fascinating. In a huge vaulted building with most of its fine stories open from first floor to the skylights (it was once a brewery), with scaffolding, pulleys, ropes, shafts all about, men work with carpenters tools and machines, with paint and fabrics and wire and glue and shellac, building the stage sets, the scenery and the floats that will turn Madison Square Garden into the brilliant fantasy that is the circus.”

The article continued with a partial list of the projects for which Studio Alliance billed Ringling-Barnum \$75,000 in 1942. Among them were spray painting the elephants’ Tarleton ballet costumes pink, a wedding cake four feet high, a cuckoo clock five feet high with a bird that pops out “and four portraits of President Roosevelt



Warshaw painting FDR portrait at Studio Alliance, New York City, February 1942. Carol Bloch Collection.

32 feet high by 18 feet wide. . . . The huge portraits of President Roosevelt will hang in the Garden for the circus, surrounded by tremendous frames of white painted plywood decorated with silver stars and blue fringe. They are done in sepia on silk, are the work of Sam Warshaw of the Studio Alliance and are among the largest portraits ever made.”⁷

Two remarkable photos in my family’s collection show Sam painting the Roosevelt portraits at the Studio Alliance. One shows him with a sketch, and the other with the finished portrait. In both, he holds the very photo of FDR that he used as his template, but despite extensive searching, I was unable to find that photo or its source.

The Greatest Show on Earth opened in Madison Square Garden on Thursday evening, April 9, 1942. The next day, the *New York Times* cooed: “Circus Opens Amid New Brilliance. The 1942 Ringling Brothers Barnum and Bailey Circus, a show of extraordinary beauty, opened last night in Madison Square Garden. Money taken in at this performance will go to the Navy Relief Fund, the Army Emergency Fund and to the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis. Norman Bel Geddes and John Murray Anderson have created a circus with the pastel quality of a child’s dream. The great ring is covered with blue sawdust, the



Photograph of famed ballerina Vera Zorina on elephant in *Life* magazine, April 20, 1942.

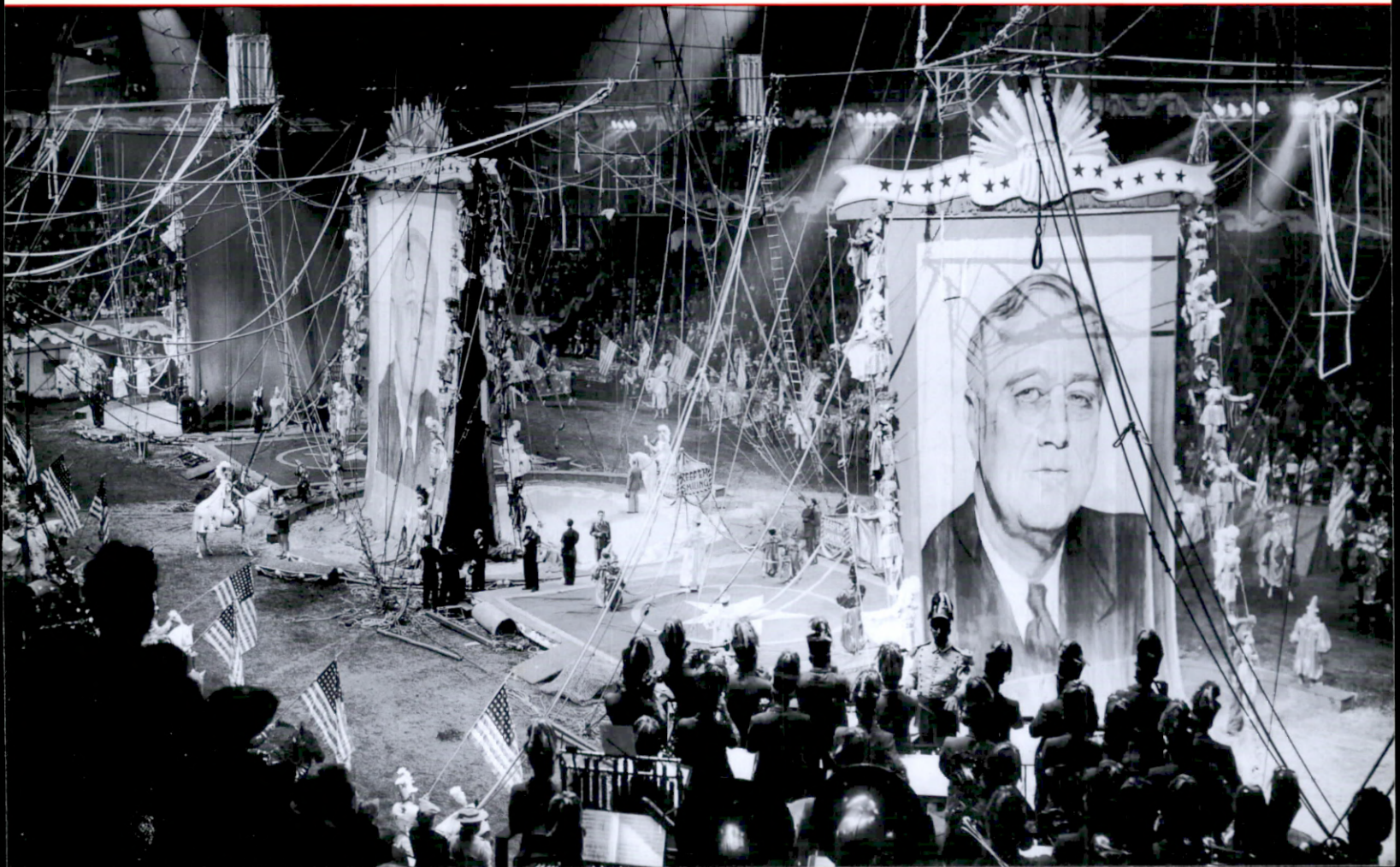
end rings with red sawdust. Spangled satins in rich color, touched by roving spotlights, carry out the dream illusion. The Parade of The Holidays, from New Year’s Day through Christmas, seemed to hold children and adults breathless. . . . The Ballet of the Elephants, later in the show, was breathtaking. Igor Stravinsky wrote the music for it and George Balanchine directed it. The cast included fifty ballet girls, and fifty (sic) dancing elephants. They came into the ring in artificial blue lighted dusk, first the little pink dancers, then the great beasts.”⁸

An image from *Life* magazine around this time shows ballerina Vera Zorina, Balanchine’s third wife balancing on the trunk of an elephant. *Variety* described Sam Warshaw’s paintings: “The Finale is the ‘Circus Salutes America,’ [and]

for it the girls (52 showgirls) mount ladders, facing the audience on all four sides. Large, silken shields of starred blue are dropped revealing the face of President Roosevelt. There are four pictures of the President and, as the sketches are shown, the girls touch off gadgets which send out showers of sparks. Entire house is on its feet, with the band striking up the national anthem.”⁹

Finding a good photo of the final portrait display proved challenging. I found none in the staunchly Republican *New York* newspapers. *PM*, the only liberal newspaper at the time, ran a full

Three of the four portraits of FDR are visible in this image taken at Madison Square Garden at the beginning of the 1942 season. Merle Evans and his band are in foreground. Pfening Archives.



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Scene from The Greatest Show on Earth's 1942 Grand Finale.

Doctored illustration from 1942 Ringling-Barnum route book showing a different image of the President, making him look happier, healthier and younger. Pfening Archives.

Barnum route book, but with a twist. It is identical to the original, except the likeness of the President has been doctored to show a smiling, more-youthful Roosevelt. This may reflect displeasure with the dour, aging President in the photograph the White House sent the circus. It may also explain why the portraits were not used in subsequent seasons. When he first saw the photo of FDR, Norman Bel Geddes thought it was a "bad picture," and, as usual, his aesthetic judgment proved correct.

I was fortunate to find Richard J. Reynolds III, a captivated member of the Ringling-Barnum audience in 1942 in Atlanta. Over seventy years later, he was still eager to talk about it, "I was then 8-years old but still have many vivid recollections about the RBBB shows I saw in those years."

He sent me this quote from a manuscript he published in 1978: "I have a vivid recollection of the finale. For that, dozens of costumed showgirls paraded into the arena and climbed webs hung alongside huge screens spotted at strategic locations around the big top. At the dramatic moment, portraits of President Franklin D. Roosevelt were made to appear on the screens and the girls all lit sparklers which they held in their hands. I recall my mother's alarm when one of the showgirls reacted as though her costume had been ignited by the foaming fountain of fireworks. On that dazzling display the 1942 performance came to a conclusion, and it was over and out for another year."¹⁰

There is another essential piece to this story. It was not a foregone conclusion that there would be any circus at all in early 1942. Just a few months after Japan bombed Pearl Harbor, a shocked but determined nation was in the midst of feverish preparations for war. The entertainment industry— theater, film, radio, carnivals, fairs and the circus—faced an uncertain future. Immediately after war was declared, blackout preparations began in anticipation of possible bombing of the U.S., and plans were made for tire and

page photo of the portrait, but I was unable to obtain a clear reproduction. Luckily at least two high resolution photographs of the paintings in the circus were discovered. One shows three of the portraits displayed in the finale at Madison Square Garden, and the other is a close-up of one of the FDR portraits surrounded by twelve showgirls on two ladders.

The picture showing three of the four FDR banners in the Garden was published in the 1942 Ringling-

gasoline rationing. Troop and materiel movement on the railways became a national priority.

Entertainment industry leaders realized they needed to make a strong case that their business was vital to the war effort, and not a dispensable frill. A *Billboard* editorial implored: "Wars are won not only by armies and navies, by tanks and guns, and airplanes and anti-aircraft guns alone, but, above all, by morale. And the show business is the greatest single force in the national life capable of maintaining the morale of the entire nation. We must bring to the people those brief interludes of escape and momentary happiness without which no people can go on; we must provide those strength giving-moments under no matter what conditions may develop. The morale of the nation is, in a large measure, our direct charge. It is a grave, terrible and sacred trust. We have a tremendous job to do through what may be long and harrowing years. We can and will do it."¹¹

Another *Billboard* editorial took a more political approach, promising that the industry would provide a source of revenue for the war effort: "Show business will—as on a previous occasion—do far more than is expected of it by helping the Treasury Department sell government bonds to finance the war effort. Performers will open the floodgates of emotions that will cause men, women and children to entrust their savings to their government. . . . Uncle Sam need not be concerned about show business in the war effort. He has only to ask and it will be done. More times than not show business will do without being asked. We of the show business are prepared."¹²

In the 1942 Ringling-Barnum route book, John and Henry



Close-up photograph by Abderon F. Sozio of FDR portrait with a dozen showgirls on two ladders during Ringling-Barnum finale. Photograph from Norman Bel Geddes Papers, Harry Ransom Research Center, University of Texas, Austin.

Ringling North noted: "Through letters from many individuals, wide editorial comment from the nation's press and direct expressions from the country's Army, Navy and political leaders, it has been made clear that the public wants the Greatest Show on Earth to carry on during war time. Everyone cannot shoulder a gun, nor is everyone expected to. Many millions must work at home, in factory, field and office to supply and maintain our armies and fleets. These millions must have diversion when released from their labors, and so far it has been our duty and privilege to help in providing such diversions. . . . President Roosevelt personally has expressed his appreciation that the Show is Going On."

Indeed, the show did go on. Despite a terrible fire in the menagerie in Cleveland on August 4, the 1942 season was one of the greatest financial successes in the show's history. The circus played 31 more performances in New York City after opening night in Madison Square Garden to sellout crowds with rave reviews. Then it travelled to 104 cities in 26 states. It required the efforts of 31 railroads to move the 90 circus cars and about 1547 employees for 13,008 miles.¹³ A total of 4.12 million spectators saw the 1942 circus show in 425 performances and each ended with a dazzling patriotic tribute featuring my Uncle Sam's four giant portraits of the President.

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Dr. Warren M. Zapol is the Reginald Jenney Professor of Anesthesia at Harvard Medical School, and the emeritus Anesthetist-in-Chief at Massachusetts General Hospital. He has studied acute respiratory failure in adults and children, and developed a life-saving treatment for "blue babies" that is used throughout the world. Dr. Zapol has also studied the diving physiology of the Weddell Seal in Antarctica.

His wife Nikki J. Zapol recently retired as an attorney with Partners Healthcare in Boston.

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Hurray! Hurray! Hurry!

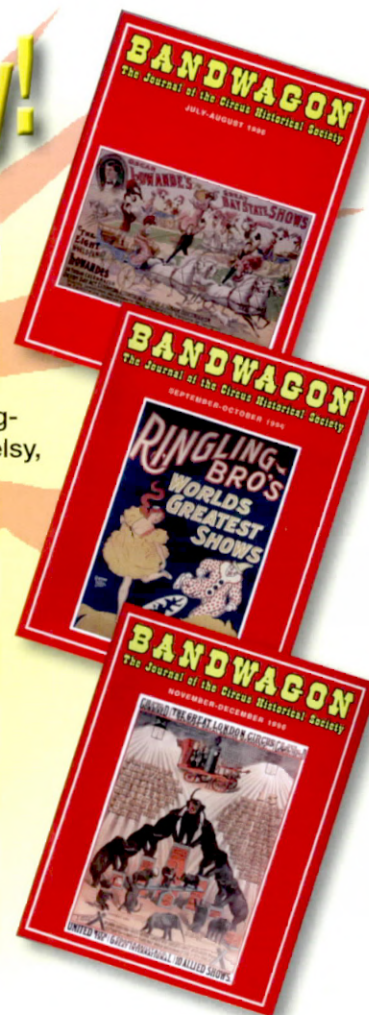
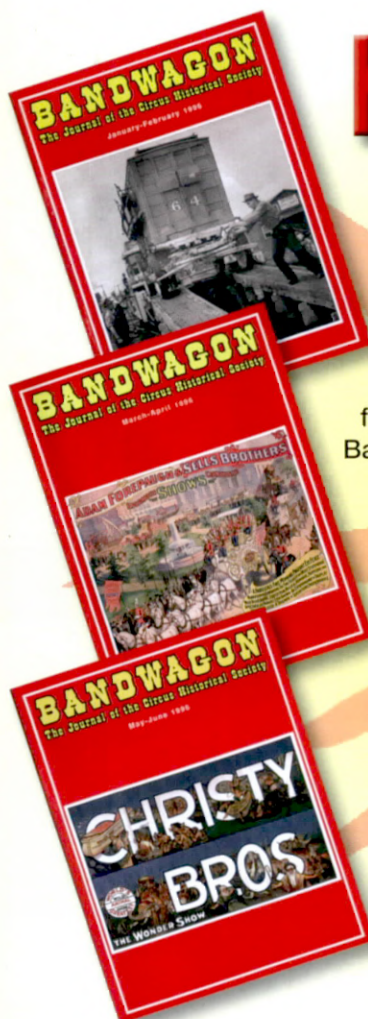
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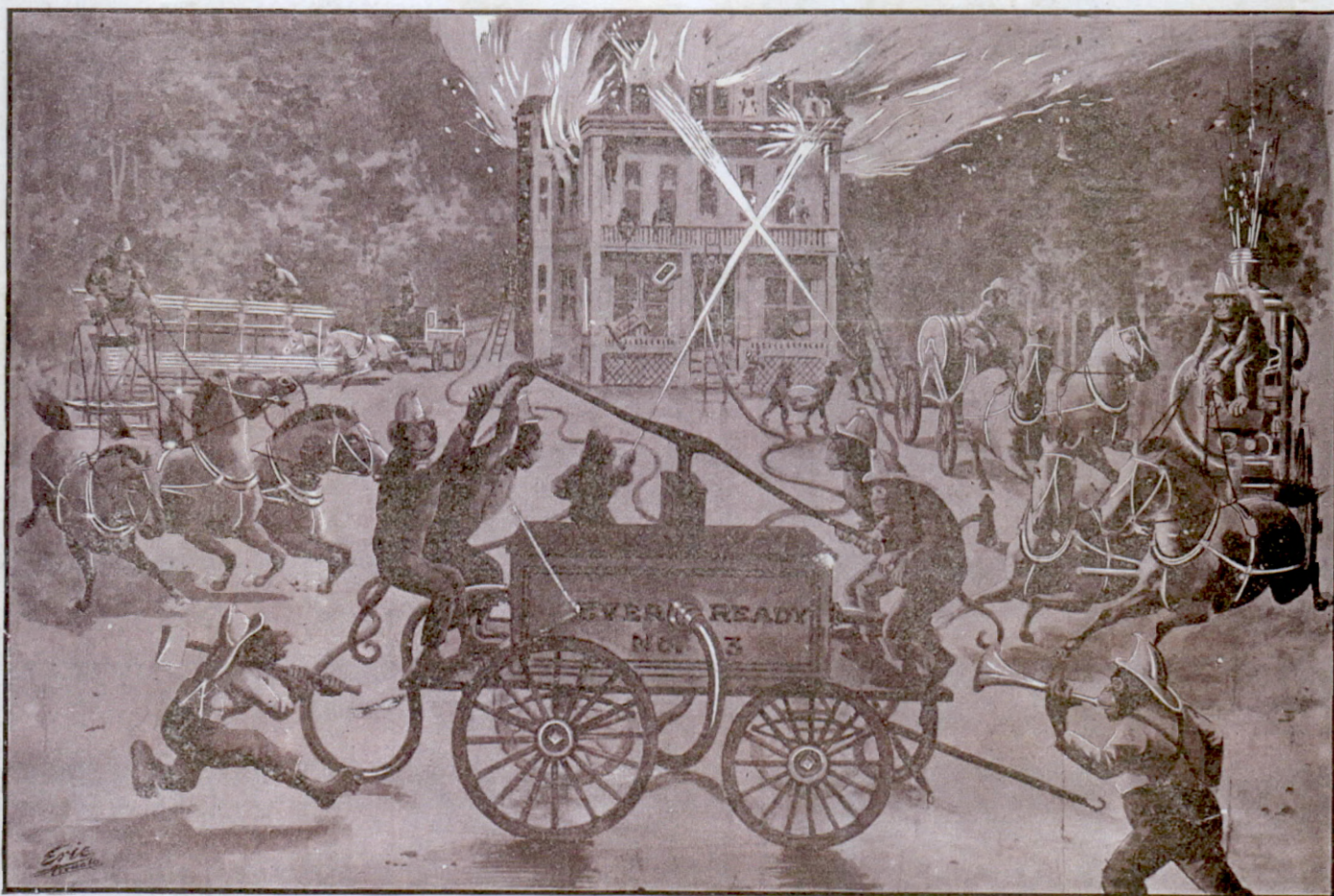
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